THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF RELIGION IN THE SOUL:

ILLUSTRATED

In a COURSE of SERIOUS and PRACTICAL ADDRESSES, ſuited to Perſons of every Character and Circumſtance:

WITH

A DEVOUT MEDITATION or PRAYER added to each CHAPTER.

By *P. DODDRIDGE*, D. D.

Qua feret hic Greſſum, Fontes dabit arida Vallis,
Inque cavas Foſſas depluet Agmen Aquae:
Inſtaurabit Iter Vires; et Numinis Ora
Viſurus Solymae ſiget in Æde Pedem.
Johnſt. Pſal. lxxxiv. 5. 6.

Teſtifying—Repentance toward God, and Faith toward our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Acts xx. 21.

Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every Man in all Wiſdom; that we may preſent every Man perfect in Chriſt Jeſus. Col. i. 28.

MONTROSE:

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To the REVEREND

Dr. *ISAAC WATTS.*

Reverend and dear SIR,

WITH the moſt affectionate gratitude and reſpect, I beg leave to preſent to you a book, which owes its exiſtence to your requeſt, its copiouſneſs to your plan, and much of its perſpicuity to your review, and to the uſe I made of your remarks on that part of it, which your health and leiſure would permit you to examine. I addreſs it to you, not to beg your patronage to it, for of that I am already well aſſured; and much leſs from any ambition of attempting your character, for which, if I were more equal to the ſubject, I ſhould think this a very improper place: But chiefly from a ſecret delight, which I find in the thought of being known to thoſe whom this may reach, as one whom you have honoured, not only with your friendſhip, but with ſo much of your eſteem and approbation too, as muſt ſubſtantially appear in committing a work to me, which you had yourſelf projected as one of the moſt conſiderable ſervices of your life.

I have long thought the love of popular applauſe a meanneſs, which a philoſophy far inferior to that of our divine maſter might have taught us to conquer. But to be eſteemed by eminently great and good men; to whom we are intimately known, appears to me, not only one of the moſt ſolid atteſtations of ſome real worth, but, next to the approbation of God and our own conſciences, one of its moſt valuable rewards. It will, I doubt not, be found ſo in that world, to which ſpirits like yours are tending, and for which thro' divine grace you have obtained ſo uncommon a degree of ripeneſs. And permit me, Sir, while I write this, to refreſh myſelf with the hope that when that union of hearts, which has ſo long ſubſiſted between us, ſhall arrive to its full maturity

and endearment there, it will be matter of mutual delight, to recollect, that you have aſſigned me, and that I have in ſome degree executed a taſk, which may perhaps under the bleſſing of God, awaken and improve religious ſentiments in the minds of thoſe whom we leave behind us, and of others who may ariſe after us in this vain, tranſitory, inſnaring world.

Such is the improvement you have made of your capacities for ſervice, that I am fully perſuaded, heaven has received very few, in theſe later ages, who have done ſo much to ſerve its intereſts here below; few, who have laboured in this beſt of cauſes with equal aſſiduity, and equal ſucceſs. And therefore, I cannot but join with all who wiſh well to the chriſtian intereſt among us, in acknowledging the goodneſs of providence to you and to the church of Chriſt, in prolonging a life at once ſo valuable and ſo tender, to ſuch an advanced period. With them, Sir, I rejoice, that God hath given you to poſſeſs in ſo extraordinary a degree, not only the conſciouſneſs of intending great benefit to the world, but the ſatisfaction of having effected it, and of ſeeing ſuch an harveſt already ſpringing up, I hope as an earneſt of a much more copious increaſe from thence. With multitudes more I bleſs God, that you are not, in this evening of ſo afflicted and yet ſo laborious a day, rendered entirely incapable of ſerving the public from the preſs, and from the pulpit; and that amidſt the pain which your active ſpirit feels, when theſe pleaſing ſervices ſuffer long interruptions from bodily weakneſs, it may be ſo ſingularly refreſhed by reflecting on that ſphere of extenſive uſefulneſs, in which by your writings you continually move.

I congratulate you, dear Sir, that while you are in a multitude of families, and ſchools of the lower claſs, condeſcending to the humble, yet important work of forming infant-minds to the firſt rudiments of religious knowledge and devout impreſſions, by your various Catechiſms and Divine Songs; you are alſo daily reading lectures of Logick, and other uſeful branches of Philoſophy, to ſtudious youth: And this, not only in private

private Academies, but in the moſt public and celebrated ſeats of learning; not merely in Scotland, and in our American colonies, (where, from ſome peculiar conſiderations, it might moſt naturally be expected;) but, thro' the amiable candor of ſome excellent men and accompliſhed tutors, in our Engliſh Univerſities too. I congratulate you, that you are teaching, no doubt, hundreds of Miniſters, and thouſands of private Chriſtians, by your ſermons, and other Theological writings; ſo happily calculated to diffuſe thro' their minds that light of knowledge, and thro' their hearts that fervour of piety, which God has been pleaſed to inkindle in your own. But above all, I congratulate you, that by your ſacred poetry, eſpecially by your Pſalms, and your Hymns, you are leading the worſhip, and I truſt alſo animating the devotion of Myriads, in our public Aſſemblies every Sabbath, and in their families or cloſets every day. This, Sir, at leaſt ſo far as it relates to the ſervice of the ſanctuary, is an unparalleled favour, by which God hath been pleaſed to diſtinguiſh you, I may boldly ſay it, beyond any of his ſervants upon earth. Well may it be eſteemed a glorious equivalent, and indeed much more than an equivalent, for all thoſe views of Eccleſiaſtical preferment, to which ſuch talents, learning, virtues, and intereſt might have intitled you in an eſtabliſhment; and I doubt not, but you joyfully accept it as ſuch.

Nor is it eaſy to conceive, in what circumſtances you could, on any ſuppoſition, have been eaſier and happier, than in that pious and truly honourable family, in which as I verily believe, in ſpecial indulgence both to you and to it, providence has been pleaſed to appoint that you ſhould ſpend ſo conſiderable a part of your life. It is my earneſt prayer, that all the remainder of it may be ſerene, uſeful, and pleaſant. And as, to my certain knowledge, your compoſitions have been the ſingular comfort of many excellent chriſtians (ſome of them numbered among my deareſt friends,) on their dying bed; for I have heard Stanza's of them repeated from the lips of ſeveral, who were doubtleſs in a few hours to begin the Song of Moſes and the Lamb: So I hope and

truſt, that when God ſhall call you to that Salvation, for which your faith and patience have ſo long been waiting, he will ſhed around you the choiceſt beams of his favour, and gladden your heart with conſolations, like thoſe which you have been the happy inſtrument of adminiſtring to others.

In the mean time, Sir, be aſſured, that I am not a little animated in the various labours to which providence has called me, by reflecting, that I have ſuch a contemporary, and eſpecially ſuch a friend; whoſe ſingle preſence would be to me as that of a Cloud of Witneſſes here below, to awaken my alacrity in the race that is ſet before me.—And I am perſuaded, that while I ſay this, I ſpeak the ſentiment of many of my brethren, even of various denominations: A conſideration, which I hope will do ſomething towards reconciling a heart ſo generous as yours, to the delay of that exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which is now ſo nearly approaching. Yes, my honoured friend, you will, I hope, chearfully endure a little longer continuance in life amidſt all its infirmities; from an aſſurance that while God is pleaſed to maintain the exerciſe of your reaſon, it is hardly poſſible that you ſhould live in vain, to the world, or yourſelf. Every day, and every trial, is brightening your crown, and rendring you ſtill more meet for an inheritance among the ſaints in light. Every word that you drop from the pulpit, has now, ſurely its peculiar weight: The eyes of many are on their aſcending prophet, eagerly intent that they may catch, if not his mantle, at leaſt ſome divine ſentence from his lips, which may long guide their ways and warm their hearts. This ſolicitude your friends bring into thoſe happy moments, in which they are favoured with your converſe in private: And when you are retired from them, your prayers I doubt not, largely contribute towards guarding your country, watering the church and bleſſing the world. Long may they continue to anſwer theſe great ends! and permit me, Sir, to conclude with expreſſing my cheerful confidence, that in thoſe

those beſt moments you are often particularly mindful of one, who ſo highly eſteems, ſo greatly needs, and ſo warmly returns that remembrance, as

Reverend and dear Sir,

Your moſt affectionate Brother.

And Obliged Humble Servant.

P. DODDRIDGE.

Northampton, Dec. 13, 1745.

PREFACE.

THE ſeveral hints given in the Dedication, and the firſt Chapter of this treatiſe, which contains a particular plan of the deſign, render it unneceſſary to introduce it with a long preface. Some of my readers may perhaps remember, that ſeveral years ago I promiſed this work to the public, in the Preface to the ſecond edition of my ſermons on the power and grace of Chriſt, &c. My much honoured friend Dr WATTS had laid the ſcheme, eſpecially of the former part. But as thoſe indiſpoſitions, with which (to the unſpeakable grief of the churches,) God has been pleaſed to exerciſe him, had forbid his hopes of being able to add this, to his many labours of love to immortal ſouls, he was pleaſed in a very affectionate and importunate manner to urge me to undertake it. And I bleſs God with my whole heart, not only that he hath carried me thro' this delightful taſk, (for ſuch indeed I have found it,) but alſo that he hath ſpared that worthy and amiable perſon to ſee it accompliſhed, and given him ſtrength, and ſpirit to review ſo conſiderable a part of it. His approbation expreſſed in ſtronger terms than modeſty will permit me to repeat, encourages me to hope that it is executed in ſuch a manner, as may, by the divine bleſſing, render it of ſome general ſervice. And I the rather expect it will be ſo, as it now comes abroad into the world, not only with my own prayers, and his, but alſo with thoſe of many other pious friends, which I have been particularly careful to engage for its ſucceſs.

Into whatever hands this work may come, I muſt deſire, that before any paſs their judgment upon it, they would pleaſe to read it thro'; that they may diſcern the connection between one part of it and another. Which I the rather requeſt, becauſe I have long obſerved, that chriſtians of different parties have been eagerly laying hold

hold on particular parts of the ſyſtem of divine truths, and have been contending about them; as if each had been all; or as if the ſeparation of the members from each other, and from the head, were the preſervation of the body, inſtead of its deſtruction. They have been zealous to eſpouſe the defence, and to maintain the honour and uſefulneſs of each apart; whereas the honour, as well as the uſefulneſs, ſeems to me to ly much in their connection: And ſuſpicions have often ariſen betwixt the reſpective defenders of each, which have appeared as unreaſonable and abſurd, as if all the preparations for ſecuring one part of a ſhip in a ſtorm were to be cenſured as a contrivance to ſink the reſt. I pray God, to give to all his miniſters, and people, more and more of the ſpirit of wiſdom, and of love, and of a ſound mind; and to remove far from us thoſe mutual jealouſies and animoſities, which hinder our acting with that unanimity, which is neceſſary in order to the ſucceſsful carrying on our common warfare againſt the enemies of chriſtianity. We may be ſure, theſe enemies will never fail to make their own advantage of our multiplied diviſions, and ſevereſt conteſts with each other. But they muſt neceſſarily loſe both their ground and the influence, in proportion to the degree, in which the energy of chriſtian principles is felt, to unite and transform the heart of thoſe by whom they are profeſſed.

I take this opportunity of adding, that as this treatiſe may be looked upon as the ſequel of my ſermons on regeneration, tho' in ſomething of a different method; a ſecond edition of thoſe ſermons is now publiſhed (in compliance with the requeſt of many of my friends,) in the ſame form and ſize with this book. I have been ſolicitous to make them both as cheap as poſſible, that I may fall in with the charitable deſigns of thoſe who may purpoſe to give them away. There is however an edition of this treatiſe in Octavo, for ſuch as rather chuſe to have it in a larger character and fairer form.

I have ſtudied the greateſt plainneſs of ſpeech, that the loweſt of my readers may, if poſſible, be able to underſtand every word; and I hope, perſons of a more

elegant taſte and refined education will pardon what appeared to me ſo neceſſary a piece of charity. Such a care in practical writings ſeems one important inſtance of that honouring all men which our amiable and condeſcending religion teaches us: And I have been particularly obliged to my worthy patron, for what he hath done to ſhorten ſome of the ſentences, and to put my meaning into plainer and more familiar words. Yet I dare ſay, the world will not ſuſpect it of having contracted any impropriety or inelegance of language, by paſſing thro' the hands of Dr. WATTS.

I muſt add one remark, here, which I heartily wiſh I had not omitted in the firſt edition, viz. That tho' I do in this book conſider my reader as ſucceſſively in a great variety of ſuppoſed circumſtances, beginning with thoſe of a thoughtleſs ſinner, and leading him thro' ſeveral ſtages of conviction, terror, &c. as what may be previous to his ſincerely accepting the goſpel, and devoting himſelf to the ſervice of God; Yet I would by no means be thought to inſinuate, that every one who is brought to that happy reſolution, arrives at it thro' thoſe particular ſteps, or feels agitations of mind equal in degree to thoſe I have deſcribed. Some ſenſe of ſin, and ſome ſerious and humbling apprehenſion of our danger and miſery in conſequence of it, muſt indeed be neceſſary, to diſpoſe us to receive the grace of the goſpel, and the Saviour who is there exhibited to our faith. But God is pleaſed ſometimes to begin the work of his grace on the heart almoſt from the firſt dawning of reaſon, and to carry it on by ſuch gentle and inſenſible degrees, that very excellent perſons, who have made the moſt eminent attainments in the divine life, have been unable to recount any remarkable hiſtory of their converſion. And ſo far as I can learn, this is moſt frequently the caſe with thoſe of them who have enjoyed the benefit of a pious education, when it has not been ſucceeded by a vicious and licentious youth. God forbid therefore, that any ſuch ſhould be ſo inſenſible of their own happineſs, as to fall into perplexity with relation to their ſpiritual ſtate, for want of being able to

trace

trace ſuch a riſe of religion in their minds, as it was neceſſary on my plan for me to deſcribe, and exemplify here. I have ſpoken my ſentiments on this head ſo fully in the VIIIth of my ſermons on regeneration, that I think none who has read, and remembers the general contents of it, can be in danger of miſtaking my meaning here. But as it is very poſſible, this book may fall into the hands of many, who have not read the other, and have no opportunity of conſulting it, I thought it proper to inſert this caution in the preface to this; and I am much obliged to that worthy and excellent perſon, who kindly reminded me of the expediency of doing it.

I conclude with deſiring my friends to forgive the neceſſary interruption which this work has given to the third volume of my Family expoſitor which I am now ſending to the preſs as faſt as I can, and hope to publiſh in leſs than a year. To this volume I have referred ſeveral additional notes, and the indexes, which are neceſſary to render the former volumes compleat; having determined to add nothing to the ſecond edition, which ſhould depreciate the former. I do not think it neceſſary to trouble my friends with a new ſubſcription; taking it for granted, that few who were pleaſed with the other part of the work, will fail of perfecting the ſett on the hiſtorical books on the New Teſtament.—— When my expoſition on the epiſtolary part may be compleated, God only knows. I will proceed in it as faſt as the other duties of my ſtation will permit; and I earneſtly beg, that if my readers find edification and advantage by any of my writings, they would in return offer a prayer for me, that God may carry me on, in that moſt important labour of my pen, under the remarkable tokens of his guidance and bleſſing.

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RISE and PROGRESS

OF

RELIGION in the SOUL.

CHAP. I

The Introduction to the Work, with ſome general Account of its Deſign.

That true religion is very rare, appears from comparing the nature of it with the lives and characters of men around us. § 1. 2. *The want of it, matter of juſt lamentation.* § 3. *To remedy this evil, is the deſign of the enſuing treatiſe:* § 4. *To which therefore the author earneſtly beſpeaks the attention of the reader, as his own heart is deeply intereſted in it.* § 5. 6. *A general plan of the work; of which the fifteen firſt chapters relate chiefly to the* RISE *of religion, and the remaining chapters to its* PROGRESS. § 7,—12. *The chapter concludes with a prayer for the ſucceſs of the work.*

§ 1. WHEN we look round about us with an attentive eye, and conſider the characters and purſuits of men, we plainly ſee, that though in the original conſtitution of their natures, they only, of all the creatures that dwell on the face of the earth, be capable of religion, yet many of them ſhamefully neglect it. And whatever different notions people may entertain of what they call *religion*, all muſt agree in owning, that it is *very far from being an univerſal thing.*

§ 2. RELIGION, in its moſt general view, is ſuch a ſenſe of God on the ſoul, and ſuch a conviction of our obligations to him, and of our dependence upon him, as ſhall engage us to make it our great care, to conduct

ourſelves in a manner, which we have reaſon to believe will be pleaſing to him. Now when we have given this plain account of *religion*, it is by no means neceſſary, that we ſhould ſearch among the ſavages of the *African* or *American* nations, to find inſtances of thoſe who are ſtrangers to it. When we view the conduct of the generality of people at home, in a *Chriſtian* and *Proteſtant nation*, in a nation whoſe obligations to God have been ſingular, almoſt beyond thoſe of any other people under Heaven, will any one preſume to ſay that *religion* has an univerſal reign among us? Will any one ſuppoſe that it prevails *in every life?* that it reigns *in every heart?* Alas, the avowed infidelity, the profanation of the name and day of God, the drunkenneſs, the lewdneſs, the injuſtice, the falſehood, the pride, the prodigality, the baſe ſelfiſhneſs, and ſtupid inſenſibility of the ſpiritual and eternal intereſts of themſelves and others, which ſo generally appear among us, loudly proclaim the contrary. So that one would imagine upon this view, that thouſands and ten thouſands thought the *neglect*, and even the *contempt of religion*, were a glory, rather than a reproach. And where is the neighbourhood, where is the ſociety, where is the happy family, (conſiſting of any conſiderable number) in which, on a more exact examination, we find reaſon to ſay, "Religion fills even this little circle?" There is perhaps a freedom from any groſs and ſcandalous immoralities, an external decency of behaviour, an attendance on the outward forms of worſhip in public, and (*here and there*) in the family; yet amidſt all this, there is nothing which looks like the genuine actings of the ſpiritual and divine life. There is no appearance of love to God, no reverence for his preſence, no deſire of his favours as the higheſt good: There is no cordial belief of *the goſpel of ſalvation*; no eager ſolicitude to eſcape that *condemnation* which we have incurred by ſin, no hearty concern to ſecure that *eternal life*, which Chriſt has purchaſed and ſecured for his people, and which he freely promiſes to

to all who will receive him Alas! whatever the love of a friend, or even of a parent can do; whatever inclination there may be, to *hope all things*, and *believe all things* the moſt favourable. Evidence to the contrary will force itſelf upon the mind, and extort the unwilling concluſion; that, whatever elſe may be amiable in this dear Friend, in that favourite child, "Religion "dwells not in its breaſt."

§ 3. To a heart that firmly believes *the goſpel*, and views perſons and things in the light of eternity, this is one of the moſt mournful conſiderations in the world. And indeed to ſuch a one, all the other calamities and evils of human nature appear trifles, when compared with this; the abſence of *real religion*, and that contrariety to it, which reigns in ſo many thouſands of mankind. Let *this* be cured, and all the other evils will eaſily be borne; nay, good will be extracted out of them. But if this continue, it *bringeth forth fruit unto death* *; and in conſequence of it, multitudes, who ſhare the entertainments of an indulgent providence with us, and are at leaſt allied to us by the bond of the ſame common nature, muſt in a few years be ſwept away into *utter deſtruction*, and be plunged beyond redemption into *everlaſting burnings*.

§. 4. I doubt not, but there are many, under thoſe various forms of religious profeſſion, which have ſo unhappily divided us in this nation, who are not only lamenting this in public, if their office in life calls them to an opportunity of doing it; but are likewiſe mourning before God in ſecret, under a ſenſe of this ſad ſtate of things; and who can appeal to him that *ſearches all hearts*, as to the ſincerity of their deſires to revive the languiſhing cauſe of vital *Chriſtianity* and ſubſtantial piety. And, among the reſt, the *author of this treatiſe* may with confidence ſay, it is this which animates him to the preſent attempt, in the midſt of ſo many other cares and labours. For this he is willing

* Rom. vii. 5.

to lay aſide many of thoſe curious amuſements in ſcience which might ſuit his own private taſte, and perhaps open a way to ſome reputation in the learned world. For this he is willing to wave the laboured ornaments of ſpeech, that he may, if poſſible, deſcend to the capacity of the loweſt part of mankind. For this, he would endeavour to convince the judgement, and to reach the heart of every reader: And, in a word, for this, without any dread of the name of an *Enthuſiaſt*, whoever may at random throw it out upon the occaſion, he would as it were, *enter with you into your cloſet*, from day to day; and, with all plainneſs and freedom, as well as ſerioufneſs, would diſcourſe to you of the great things which he has learnt from the chriſtian revelation, and on which he aſſuredly knows your everlaſting happineſs to depend: That if you hitherto have lived without religion, you may be now awakened to the conſideration of it, and may be inſtructed in its nature and importance; or that if you are already, thro' divine grace, experimentally acquainted with it, you may be aſſiſted to make a farther progreſs.

§. 5. But he earneſtly intreats this favour of you, that, as it is plainly *a ſerious buſineſs* we are entering upon, you would be pleaſed to give him a ſerious and an attentive hearing. He intreats, that theſe addreſſes, and theſe meditations, may be peruſed at leiſure, and be thought over in retirement; and that you would do him and yourſelf the juſtice, to believe the repreſentations which are here made, and the warnings which are here given, to proceed from ſincerity and love; from an heart, which would not deſignedly give one moment's uneceſſary pain to the meaneſt creature on the face of the earth, and much leſs to any human mind. If he be importunate, it is, becauſe he at leaſt imagines, that there is juſt reaſon for it; and fears, leſt amidſt the multitudes, who are undone by the utter neglect of religion, and among thoſe who are greatly damaged for want of a more reſolute and conſtant attendance

tendance to it, this may be the caſe of ſome into whoſe hands this treatiſe may fall.

§. 6. He is a barbarian, and deſerves not to be called a man, who can look upon the ſorrows of his fellow creatures without *drawing out his ſoul* unto them, and *wiſhing*, at leaſt, that it were *in the power of his hand* to help them. Surely earth would be an heaven to that man, who could go about from place to place ſcattering happineſs whereſoever he came, though it were only the body that he were capable of relieving, and tho' he could impart nothing better than the happineſs of a mortal life. But the happineſs riſes, in proportion to the nature and degree of good which he imparts. Happy, are we ready to ſay, were thoſe honoured ſervants of Chriſt, who, in the early days of his church, were the benevolent and ſympathizing inſtruments of conveying miraculous healing to thoſe whoſe caſes ſeemed deſperate; who poured in upon the blind and the deaf the pleaſures of light and ſound, and called up the dead to the powers of action and enjoyment. But this is an honour and happineſs, which it is not fit for God commonly to beſtow on mortal men. Yet there have been in every age, and bleſſed be his name, there ſtill are thoſe, whom he has condeſcended to make his inſtruments in conveying nobler and more laſting bleſſings than theſe to their fellow creatures. Death hath long ſince veiled the eyes, and ſtopped the ears of thoſe, who were the ſubjects of miraculous healing; and recovered its empire over thoſe who were once recalled from the grave. But the ſouls who are prevailed upon to receive the goſpel, *live for ever*. God has owned the labours of his faithful Miniſters in every age, to produce theſe bleſſed effects; and ſome of them *being dead, yet ſpeak* (b) with power and ſucceſs in this important cauſe. Wonder not then, if living and dying, I be ambitious of this honour; and if *my mouth be* freely *opened*, where I can truly ſay, *my heart is enlarged* (c).

(b) Heb. xi. 4. (c) 2 Cor. vi. 11.

§. 7. In forming my *general plan* I have been ſolicitous, that this little treatiſe might, if poſſible, be uſeful to all its readers, and contain ſomething ſuitable to each. I will therefore take the *man* and the *chriſtian*, in a great *variety of circumſtances*. I will firſt ſuppoſe myſelf addreſſing one of the vaſt number of *thoughtleſs creatures*, who have hitherto been utterly unconcerned about religion; and will try what can be done, by all plainneſs and earneſtneſs of addreſs, to *awaken him* from this fatal lethargy, to *a cure*, (*Chap.* 3.) I will labour to fix a deep and awful *conviction of guilt* upon his conſcience, (*Chap.* 4.) and to ſtrip him of his *vain excuſes* and his flattering hopes. (*Chap.* 5.) I will read to him, Oh! that I could fix on his heart, *that ſentence*, that dreadful ſentence, which a righteous and an Almighty God hath denounced againſt him, as a ſinner; (*Chap.* 6.) and endeavour to ſhew him, in how *helpleſs a ſtate* he lies under this condemnation, as to any capacity he has of delivering himſelf, (*Chap.* 7.) But I do not mean to leave any in ſo terrible a ſituation: I will joyfully proclaim *the glad tidings of pardon and ſalvation by Chriſt Jeſus our Lord*, which is all the ſupport and confidence of my own ſoul: (*Chap.* 8.) And then I will give ſome general view of *the way*, by which *this ſalvation* is to be obtained; (*Chap.* 9.) *urging* the ſinner *to accept of it*, as affectionately as I can; (*Chap.* 10.) tho' nothing can be ſufficiently pathetic, where, as in this matter, the life of an immortal ſoul is in queſtion.

§. 8. Too probable it is, that *ſome* will, after all this, remain *inſenſible*; and therefore, that their ſad caſe may not incumber the following articles, I ſhall here *take a ſolemn leave* of them: (*Chap.* 11.) And then ſhall turn and addreſs myſelf, as compaſſionately as I can, to a moſt contrary character: I mean to a *ſoul overwhelmed* with a ſenſe of the greatneſs of its ſins, and trembling under the burthen, as if there were *no more hope for him in God*, (*Chap.* 12.) And that nothing may be omitted which may give ſolid peace to the troubled ſpirit, I ſhall endeavour to *guide its enquiries* as to the *evidences* of ſin-

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ere *repentance* and *faith*; (*Chap.* 13.) which will be farther illuſtrated by a more particular view of the *ſeveral branches* of the *chriſtian temper*, ſuch as may ſerve at once to aſſiſt the reader in judging *what he is*, and to ſhew him *what he ſhould labour to be.* (*Chap.* 14.) This will naturally lead to a view of *the need* we have of the *influences of the bleſſed ſpirit*, to aſſiſt us in the important and difficult work of the *true chriſtian*; and of *the encouragement* we have *to hope* for his *divine aſſiſtance.* (*Chap.* 15.) In an humble dependence on which, I ſhall then enter on the conſideration of *ſeveral caſes* which often occur in the *chriſtian* life, in which *particular addreſſes* to the conſcience may be requiſite and uſeful.

§. 9. As ſome particular difficulties and diſcouragements attend the *firſt entrance* on a religious courſe, it will here be our firſt care *to animate the young convert* againſt them. (*Chap.* 16.) And that it may be done more effectually, I ſhall urge *a ſolemn dedication* of himſelf to God; (*Chap.* 17.) to be confirmed by entering into the full communion of the church by *an approach to the ſacred table.* (*Chap.* 18.) That theſe engagements may be more happily fulfilled, we ſhall endeavour to draw *a more particular plan* of that devout, regular, and accurate courſe, which ought daily to be attended to: (*Chap.* 19.) And becauſe the idea will probably riſe ſo much *higher*, than what is *the general practice*, even of good men, we ſhall endeavour to perſuade the reader to *make the attempt*, hard as it may ſeem; (*Chap.* 20.) and ſhall caution him againſt *various temptations*, which might otherwiſe draw him aſide to negligence and ſin, (*Chap.* 21.)

§. 10. Happy will it be for the reader, if theſe exhortations and cautions be attended to with becoming regard; but as it is, alas, too probable, that notwithſtanding all, the infirmities of nature will ſometimes prevail, we ſhall conſider the caſe of *deadneſs* and *languor in religion*, which often ſteals upon us by inſenſible degrees; (*Chap.* 22.) from whence there is too eaſy a paſſage to that terrible one of *a return into known and deliberate ſin.* (*Chap.* 23.) And as the one or the other of theſe tends,

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in *a* proportionable degree, to *provoke* the bleſſed God *to hide his face*, and his injured *ſpirit to withdraw*, that melancholy condition will be taken into a particular ſurvey. (*Chap.* 24.) I ſhall then take notice alſo of the caſe of *great and heavy afflictions* in life; (*Chap.* 25.) a diſcipline which the beſt of men have reaſon to expect, eſpecially when they *backſlide* from God, and yield to their ſpiritual enemies.

§. 11. Inſtances of this kind, will, I fear, be too frequent; yet, I truſt, there will be many others, whoſe *path, like the dawning light*, will *ſhine more and more until the perfect day* (b). And therefore we ſhall endeavour in the beſt manner we can, to aſſiſt the *chriſtian* in *paſſing a true judgement* on the *growth of grace* in his heart, (*Chap.* 26.) as we had done before in judging of its ſincerity. And as nothing conduces more to the advance of grace, than the lively exerciſe of *love* to God and a *holy joy* in him, we ſhall here remind the real *chriſtian* of thoſe *mercies*, which tend to *excite that love* and joy; (*Chap.* 27.) and, in the views of them, to *animate* him to thoſe vigorous efforts of *uſefulneſs in life*, which ſo well become his character, and will have ſo happy an efficacy on brightening his crown. (*Chap.* 28.) Supposing him to act accordingly, we ſhall then labour to illuſtrate and aſſiſt *the delight*, with which he may *look forward* to the awful ſolemnities of *death* and *judgment*. (*Chap.* 29.) And ſhall cloſe the ſcene by accompanying him, as it were, to the neareſt confines of that *dark valley*, thro' which he is to paſs to glory; giving him ſuch *directions*, as may ſeem moſt ſubſervient to his honouring God, and adorning religion, by his dying hope; that, thro' the divine bleſſing and grace, I may be in ſome inſtances ſo ſucceſsful, as to leave thoſe *triumphing* in the views of judgment and eternity, and glorifying God by a truly *chriſtian* life and death, whom I found *trembling* in the apprehenſions of future miſery; or perhaps, in a much more dangerous and miſerable circumſtance

(b) Prov. iv. 18.

circumſtance than that; I mean, entirely forgetting the proſpect, and ſunk into the moſt ſtupid *inſenſibility* of thoſe things, for an attendance to which the human mind was formed, and in compariſon of which, all the purſuits of this tranſitory life are *emptier than wind*, and *lighter than a feather*.

§. 12. Such a variety of heads muſt, to be ſure, be handled but *briefly*, as we intend to bring them within the bulk of a moderate volume. I ſhall not, therefore, diſcuſs them, as a *preacher* might properly do in *ſermons*, in which the truths of religion are profeſſedly to be explained and taught, defended and improved, in a wide variety, and long detail of proportions, arguments, objections, replies, and inferences, marſhall'd and number'd under their diſtinct generals, I ſhall here ſpeak in a looſer and freer manner, as a *friend* to a friend; juſt as I would do, if I were to be in perſon admitted to a private audience, by one whom I tenderly loved, and whoſe circumſtances and character I knew to be like that, which the *title* of one *chapter* or another of this treatiſe deſcribes. And when I have diſcourſed with him a little while, which will ſeldom be ſo long as *half an hour*; I ſhall, as it were, ſtep aſide, and leave him to *meditate* on what he has heard, or endeavour to aſſiſt him in ſuch fervent addreſſes to God, as it may be proper to mingle with thoſe *meditations*. In the mean time, I will here take the liberty to *pray* over my reader and my work; and to commend it ſolemnly to the divine bleſſing, in token of my deep conviction of an entire dependence upon it. And I am well perſuaded, that ſentiments like theſe are common, in the general, to every *faithful miniſter*, to every *real chriſtian*.

PRAYER *for the* Succeſs *of this Work, in promoting* the Riſe *and* Progreſs of Religion.

OH thou great eternal original, and author of all "created being and happineſs! I adore thee who haſt made man a creature capable of religion, and "haſt

" haſt beſtowed this divinity and felicity upon our na-
" ture, that it may be taught to ſay, *Where is God our*
" *maker* (e)? I lament that degeneracy ſpread over
" the whole human race, which has *turned our glory in-*
" *to ſhame* (f), and has render'd the forgetfulneſs of God
" (unnatural as it is) ſo common and ſo univerſal a
" diſeaſe. Holy father, we know, it is thy preſence,
" and thy teaching alone, that can reclaim thy wander-
" ing children; can impreſs a ſenſe of divine things on
" the heart, and render that ſenſe laſting and effectual.
" From thee proceed all good purpoſes and deſires;
" and this deſire above all, of diffuſing wiſdom, piety
" and happineſs in this world, which (tho' ſunk in ſuch
" deep apoſtacy) thine infinite mercy has not utterly
" forſaken.

" Thou *knoweſt*, O Lord *the hearts of the children of*
" *men* (g); and an upright ſoul, in the midſt of all the
" cenſures and ſuſpicions it may meet with, rejoices
" in thine intimate knowledge of its moſt ſecret ſen-
" tences and principles of action. Thou knoweſt the
" ſincerity and fervency, with which thine *unworthy*
" *ſervant* deſires to ſpread the knowledge of thy name,
" and the ſavour of thy goſpel, among all to whom this
" work may reach. Thou knoweſt, that hadſt thou
" given him an abundance of this world, it would have
" been, in his eſteem, the nobleſt pleaſure that abun-
" dance could have afforded, to have been thine almoner,
" in diſtributing thy bounties to the indigent and ne-
" ceſſitous, and ſo cauſing the ſorrowful heart to re-
" joice in thy goodneſs, diſpenſed thro' his hands.—
" Thou knoweſt, that hadſt thou given him, either by
" ordinary or extraordinary methods, the gifts of heal-
" ing, it would have been his daily delight, to relieve
" the pains, the maladies, and the infirmities of mens
" bodies; to have ſeen the languiſhing countenance,
" brightened by returning health and chearfulneſs;
" and much more to have beheld the roving diſ-
tracted

(e) Job xxxv. 10. (f) Hoſ. iv. 7. (g) 1 Chron. vi. 30.

" tracted mind, reduced to calmneſs and ſerenity, in
" the exerciſe of its rational faculties. Yet happier, far
" happier will he think himſelf, in thoſe humble circum-
" ſtances, in which thy providence hath placed him,
" if thou vouchſafe to honour theſe his feeble endea-
" vours, as the means of relieving and enriching
" mens minds; of recovering them from the madneſs of
" a ſinful ſtate, and bringing back thy reaſonable crea-
" tures to the knowledge, the ſervice, and the enjoy-
" ment of their God; or of improving thoſe, who are
" already reduced.

" O may it have that bleſſed influence on the perſon
" whoſoever he be, that is now reading theſe lines,
" and on all who may read or hear them! *Let not my*
" *Lord be angry*, if I preſume to aſk, that however
" weak and contemptible this work may ſeem in the
" eyes of the children of this world, and however imper-
" fect it really be, as well as the author of it unworthy,
" it may nevertheleſs *live before thee*; and thro' a di-
" vine power, be mighty to produce the riſe and pro-
" greſs of religion in the minds of multitudes, in diſtant
" places, and in generations yet to come! Impute it
" not, O God, as a culpable ambition, if I deſire, that
" whatever becomes of *my name*, about which I would
" not loſe one thought before thee, this work, to which
" I am now applying myſelf in thy ſtrength, may be
" compleated and propagated far abroad; that it may
" reach to thoſe that are yet unborn, and teach them *thy*
" *name* and *thy praiſe*, when the author has long dwelt in
" the duſt: That ſo when he ſhall appear before thee
" in the great day of final account, *his joy* may be in-
" creaſed, and his *crown* brightened, by numbers be-
" fore unknown to each other, and to him! But if
" *this petition* be too great to be granted to one, who
" pretends no claim, but thy ſovereign grace, to hope
" for being favoured with the bleſſed inſtrument of con-
" verting and ſaving *one ſoul*: And if it be *but one*, and
" that the weakeſt and meaneſt of thoſe who are cap-
" able of receiving this addreſs, it ſhall be moſt thank-

" fully

" fully accepted as a rich recompence for all the thought
" and labour it may coſt; and though it ſhould be amidſt
" a thouſand diſappointments with reſpect to others, yet
" it ſhall be the ſubject of immortal ſongs of praiſe
" to thee, O bleſſed God, for and by every ſoul, whom,
" thro' the *blood of Jeſus* and the *grace of thy ſpirit*, thou
" haſt ſaved; and everlaſting honours ſhall be aſcribed
" to the *Father*, to the *Son*, and to the *Holy Spirit*,
" by the innumerable company of angels, and by the
" General Aſſembly and church of the firſt-born in
" heaven. Amen."

CHAP. II.

The Careleſs Sinner awakened.

It is too ſuppoſable a caſe, that this treatiſe may come into ſuch hands: §. 1, 2. *Since many, not groſsly vicious, fall under that character.* §. 3, 4. *A more particular illuſtration of this caſe, with an appeal to the reader, whether it be not his own.* §. 5, 6. *Expoſtulation with ſuch;* §. 7, 9. *More particularly,* (1.) *From acknowledged principles, relating to the nature of* GOD, *his univerſal preſence, agency, and perfections.* §. 10, 12. (2.) *From a view of perſonal obligations to him.* §. 13. (3.) *From the danger of this neglect, when conſidered in its aſpect on a future ſtate.* §. 14. *An appeal to the conſcience, as already convinced.* §. 15. *Tranſition to the ſubject of the next chapter.* §. 16. *The meditation of a ſinner, who having been long thoughtleſs, begins to be awakened.*

§. 1. SHAMEFULLY and fatally as religion is neglected in the world, yet bleſſed be GOD it has ſome ſincere diſciples; *children of wiſdom*, by whom even in this fooliſh and degenerate age, it is juſtified (a) who having, by divine grace been brought to the knowledge of GOD in Chriſt, have faithfully devoted their hearts to him, and by a natural conſequence, are de-

votin-

(a) Matth. xi. 19.

voting their lives to his ſervice. Could I be ſure this treatiſe would fall into no hands but theirs, my work would be ſhorter, eaſier, and pleaſanter.

§. 2. But among the thouſands that neglect religion, it is more than poſſible, that ſome of my readers may be included: And I am ſo deeply affected with their unhappy caſe, that the temper of my heart, as well as the proper method of my ſubject, leads me in the firſt place to addreſs myſelf to ſuch; to apply to every one of them; and therefore to you, O reader, whoever you are, who may come under the denomination of a *careleſs ſinner*.

§. 3. Be not, I beſeech you, angry at the name. The phyſicians of ſouls muſt ſpeak plainly, or they may murder thoſe whom they ſhould cure. I would make no harſh and unreaſonable ſuppoſition, I would charge you with nothing more, than is abſolutely neceſſary to convince you, that *you* are the perſon to whom I ſpeak. I will not, therefore, imagine you to be a prophane and abandoned profligate. I will not ſuppoſe, that you allow yourſelf to blaſpheme GOD, to diſhonour his name by cuſtomary ſwearing, or groſsly to violate his Sabbath, or commonly to neglect the ſolemnities of his public worſhip: I will not imagine that you have injured your neighbours, in their lives, their chaſtity, or their poſſeſſions, either by violence or by fraud; or that you have ſcandalouſly debaſed the rational nature of man by that vile intemperance, which transforms us into the worſt kind of brutes, or ſomething beneath them.

§. 4. In oppoſition to all this, I will ſuppoſe, that you believe the exiſtence and providence of God, and the truth of chriſtianity, as a revelation from him: Of which, if you have any doubt, I muſt deſire, that you would immediately ſeek your ſatisfaction elſewhere.* I ſay, immediately: Becauſe not to believe it, is in ef-

* In ſuch a caſe, I beg leave to refer the reader to my *three ſermons* on *the Evidence of Chriſtianity*; the laſt of the *ten* on the *Power and Grace of Chriſt*; in which he may ſee the hitherto unſhaken foundations of my own faith, in a ſhort, and I hope, a clear view.

fect to diſbelieve it; and will make your ruin equally certain, though perhaps it may leave it leſs aggravated, than if contempt and oppoſition had been added to ſuſpicion and neglect. But ſuppoſing you to be a nominal chriſtian, and not a deiſt, or a ſceptic; I will alſo ſuppoſe your conduct among men to be not only blameleſs but amiable; and that they who know you moſt intimately, muſt acknowledge, that you are juſt and ſober, humane and courteous, compaſſionate and liberal: Yet with all this, you may lack that *one thing* (b) on which your eternal happineſs depends.

§. 5. I beſeech you, reader, whoever you are, that you would now look ſeriouſly into your own heart, and aſk it this one plain queſtion, *Am I truly religious?* Is the love of GOD the governing principle of my life? Do I walk under a ſenſe of his preſence? Do I converſe with him from day to day, in the exerciſe of prayer and praiſe? And am I, on the whole, making his buſineſs my ſervice and my delight, regarding him as my maſter and my father?

§. 6. It is my preſent buſineſs only to addreſs myſelf to the perſon, whoſe conſcience anſwers in the negative. And I would addreſs with equal plainneſs, and equal freedom, to high and low, to rich and poor: To you, who (as the ſcripture with a dreadful propriety expreſſes it) live without GOD in the world (c); and while in words and forms, you *own GOD, deny him in your actions* (d), and behave yourſelves in the main, (a few external ceremonies only excepted,) juſt as you would do, if you believed, and were ſure, there was no GOD. Unhappy creature, whoever you are! your own heart condemns you immediately; and how much more that God who is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things (e). He is in ſecret (f), as well as in public; and words cannot expreſs the delight, with which his children converſe with him alone: But in ſecret you acknowledge him not; you neither pray to him,

(b) Mark x. 21. (c) Eph. ii. 12. (d) Tit. i. 16.
(e) 1 John iii. 20. (f) Math. vi. 6.

him, nor praiſe him in your retirements. Accounts, correſpondencies, ſtudies may often bring you into your cloſet; but if nothing but devotion were to be tranſacted there, it would be to you quite an unfreqented place. And thus you go on from day to day, in a continual forgetfulneſs of GOD; and are as thoughtleſs about religion, as if you had long ſince demonſtrated it to yourſelf, that it was a mere dream. If, indeed, you are ſick, you will perhaps cry to GOD for health; in any extreme danger, you will lift up your eyes and voice for deliverance: But as for the pardon of ſin, and the other bleſſings of the goſpel, you are not at all inwardly ſolicitous about them; tho' you profeſs to believe, that the goſpel is divine, and the bleſſings of it eternal. All your thoughts, and all your hours, are divided between the buſineſs and the amuſements of life: And if now and then, an awful providence, or a ſerious ſermon or book, awakens you, it is but a few days, or it may be a few hours, and you are the ſame careleſs creature you ever were before. On the whole, you act, as if you were reſolved to put it to the venture, and at your own expence to make the experiment, whether the conſequences of neglecting religion be indeed as terrible, as its miniſters and friends have repreſented. Their remonſtrances do indeed ſometimes force themſelves upon you, as (conſidering the age and country in which you live,) it is hardly poſſible entirely to avoid them; but you have, it may be, found out the art of *Iſaiah's* people, *hearing to hear, and not to underſtand; and ſeeing to ſee, and not to perceive: Your heart is waxed groſs, your eyes are cloſed, and your ears heavy* (g). Under the very ordinances of worſhip, your thoughts are at the end of the earth (h). Every amuſement of the imagination is welcome, if it may but lead away your mind from ſo inſipid, and ſo diſagreable a ſubject as religion. And probably the very laſt time you were in a worſhipping aſſembly, you managed, juſt as you would have done, if

(g) Iſai. vi. 9—10. (h) Prov. xvii. 24.

you had thought GOD knew nothing of your behaviour; or as if you did not think it worth one ſingle care, whether he were pleaſed or diſpleaſed with it.

§. 7. Alas! is it then to come to this, with all your belief of GOD, and providence, and ſcripture! That *religion is not worth a thought!* That it is not worth one hour's ſerious conſideration and reflection, "What GOD "and CHRIST are; and what you yourſelves are, and "what you muſt hereafter be!" Where then are all your rational faculties? How are they employed, or rather, how are they ſtupified and benumbed?

§. 8. The certainty and importance of the things of which I ſpeak are ſo evident, from the principles which you yourſelves grant, that one might almoſt ſet a child or an idiot to reaſon upon them. And yet they are neglected by thoſe, who are grown up to underſtanding, and perhaps ſome of them to ſuch refinement of underſtanding, that they would think themſelves greatly injured, if they were not to be reckoned among the politer, and the more learned part of mankind.

§. 9. But it is not your neglect, ſirs, that can deſtroy the being or importance of ſuch things as theſe. It may indeed deſtroy you, but it cannot in the leaſt affect them. Permit me therefore, having been myſelf awakened, to come to each of you, and ſay, as the mariners did to Jonah, while aſleep in the midſt of a much leſs dangerous ſtorm, *What meaneſt thou, O ſleeper? Ariſe and call upon thy GOD* (i). Do you doubt as to the reaſonableneſs, or neceſſity, of doing it? *I will demand, and anſwer me* (k): Anſwer me to your own conſcience, as one that muſt, e'er long, render another kind of account.

§. 10. You own, that there is a GOD: And well you may: For you cannot open your eyes, but you ſee the evident proofs of his being, his preſence, and his agency. You behold him around you in every object. You feel him within you, if I may ſo ſpeak, in every vein, and in every nerve. You ſee, and you feel, not only that he hath

(i) Jon. i. 6. (k) Job xxxviii. 3.

hath formed you with an exquiſite wiſdom, which no mortal man could ever fully explain or comprehend, but that he is continually near you, wherever you are, and however you are employed, by day, or by night; *in him you live and move, and have your being* (l). Common ſenſe will tell you, that it is not your own wiſdom, and power, and attention, that cauſes your heart to beat, and your blood to circulate; that draws in, and ſends out that breath of life, that precarious breath of a moſt uncertain life, that is in *your noſtrils* (m). Theſe things are done when you ſleep, as well as in thoſe walking moments, when you think not of the circulation of the blood, or of the neceſſity of breathing, nor ſo much as to recollect that you have a heart and lungs. Now what is this, but the hand of GOD, perpetually ſupporting and actuating thoſe curious machines that he has made?

§. 11. Nor is this his care limited to you; but if you look all around you, far as your views can reach, you ſee it extending itſelf on every ſide: And Oh how much farther than you can trace it! Reflect on the light and heat, which the ſun every where diſpenſes; on the air, which ſurrounds all our globe, on the right temperature of which the life of the whole human race depends, and that of all the inferior creatures which dwell on the earth. Think of the ſuitable and plentiful proviſion made for man and beaſt; the graſs, the grain, the variety of fruits, and herbs, and flowers; every thing that nouriſhes us, every thing that delights us; and ſay, whether it do not ſpeak plainly and loudly, that our Almighty Maker is near, and that he is careful of us, and kind to us. And while all theſe things proclaim his goodneſs, do they not alſo proclaim his power? For what power is any thing comparable to that, which furniſhes out thoſe gifts of royal bounty; and which, unwearied and unchanged, produces continually, from day to day, and from age to age, ſuch aſtoniſhing and magnificent effects over the face of the whole earth, and thro' all the regions of heaven?

§. 12.

(l) Acts xvii. 28. (m) Iſai. ii. 22.

§. 12. It is then evident, that GOD is preſent, preſent with you at this moment; even GOD your Creator and Preſerver, GOD the creator and preſerver of the whole viſible and inviſible world. And is he not preſent as a moſt obſervant and attentive being? He that formed the eye, ſhall not he ſee? He that planted the ear, ſhall not he hear? He that teaches man knowledge, that gives him his rational faculties, and pours in upon his opening mind all the light it receives by them, *ſhall not he know* (n)? He who ſees all the neceſſities of his creatures ſo ſeaſonably to provide for them, ſhall he not ſee their actions too; and ſeeing ſhall he not judge them? Has he given us a ſenſe and diſcernment of what is good and evil, of what is true and falſe, of what is fair and deformed in temper and conduct; and has he himſelf no diſcernment of theſe things? Trifle not with your conſcience, which tells you at once, that he judges of it, and approves or condemns, as it is decent or indecent, reaſonable or unreaſonable; and that the judgement which he paſſes, is of infinite importance to all his creatures.

§. 13. And now, to apply all this to your own caſe, let me ſeriouſly aſk you, Is it a decent and reaſonable thing, that this great and glorious benefactor ſhould be neglected by his rational creatures? by thoſe, that are capable of attaining to ſome knowledge of him, and preſenting to him ſome homage? Is it decent and reaſonable that he ſhould be forgotten and neglected by you? Are you alone of all the works of his hands, forgotten or neglected by him? Oh ſinner, thoughtleſs as you are, you cannot dare to ſay that, or even to think it. You need not go back to the helpleſs days of your infancy and childhood, to convince you of the contrary. You need not, in order to this, to recollect the remarkable deliverances, which, perhaps, were wrought out for you many years ago. The repoſe of the laſt night, the refreſhment and comfort you have received this day; yea,

(n) Pſal. xciv. 9—10.

yea, the mercies you are receiving this very moment, bear witneſs to him; and yet you regard him not. Ungrateful creature that you are! Could you have treated any human benefactor thus? Could you have borne to neglect a kind parent, or any generous friend, that had but a few months acted the part of a parent to you? to have taken no notice of him, while in his preſence; to have returned him no thanks; to have had no contrivances to make ſome little acknowledgment for all his goodneſs? Human nature, bad as it is, is not fallen ſo low. Nay, the brutal nature is not ſo low as this.—Surely every domeſtick animal round you muſt ſhame ſuch ingratitude. If you do but for a few days take a little kind notice of a dog, and feed him with the refuſe of your table, he will wait upon you and love to be near you; he will be eager to follow you from place to place, or when, after a little abſence, you return home, will try by a thouſand fond tranſported motions, to tell you how much he rejoices to ſee you again. Nay, brutes, far leſs ſagacious and apprehenſive, have ſome ſenſe of our kindneſs, and expreſs it after their way: As the bleſſed GOD condeſcends to obſerve, in this very view, in which I mention it, *The* dull *ox knows its owner, and the* ſtupid *aſs his maſter's crib* [o]: What lamentable degeneracy therefore is it, that you do not know, that you, who have been numbered among GOD's profeſſing people, do not, and will not conſider your numberleſs obligations to him?

§. 14 Surely, if you have any ingenuity of temper, you muſt be aſhamed and grieved in the review: But if you have not, give me leave farther to expoſtulate with you on this head, by ſetting it in ſomething of a different light. Can you think yourſelves ſafe, while you are acting a part like this? Do you not in your conſcience believe, there will be a future judgment? Do you not believe there is an inviſible and eternal world? As profeſſed chriſtians, we all believe it; for it is no controverted

[o] Iſai. i. 3.

controverted point, but diſplayed in ſcripture with ſo clear an evidence, that, ſubtile and ingenious as men are in error, they have not yet found out a way to evade it. And believing this, do you not ſee, that while you are thus wandering from GOD, *deſtruction and miſery are in your ways* [p]? Will this indolence and negligence of temper be any ſecurity to you? Will it guard you from death? Will it excuſe you from judgment? You might much more reaſonably expect, that ſhutting your eyes would be a defence againſt the rage of a devouring lion; or that looking another way ſhould ſecure your body from being pierced by a bullet or a ſword. When GOD ſpeaks of the extravagant folly of ſome thoughtleſs creatures, who would hearken to no admonition now, he adds, in a very awful manner, *In the latter day they ſhall conſider it perfectly* [q]. And is not this applicable to you? Muſt you not, ſooner or latter, be brought to think of theſe things, whether you will or no? And, in the mean time, do you not certainly know, that timely and ſerious reflection upon them is, thro' divine grace, the only way to prevent your ruin?

§. 15. Yes ſinner, I need not multiply words on a ſubject like this. Your conſcience is already inwardly convinced, tho' your pride may be unwilling to own it. And, to prove it, let me aſk you one queſtion more: Would you upon any terms and conſiderations whatever, come to a reſolution abſolutely to diſmiſs all farther thought of religion, and all care about it, from this day and hour, and to abide by the conſequences of that neglect? I believe, hardly any man living would be bold enough to determine upon this. I believe, moſt of my readers would be ready to tremble at the thought of it.

§. 16. But if it be neceſſary to take theſe things into conſideration at all, it is neceſſary to do it quickly; for life itſelf is not ſo very long, nor ſo certain, that

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[p] Rom. iii. 16. [q] Jer. xxiii. 20.

a wiſe man ſhould riſque much upon its continuance. And I hope to convince you, when I have another hearing, that it is neceſſary to do it immediately; and that next to the madneſs of reſolving, you will not think of religion at all, is that of ſaying, you will think of it hereafter. In the mean time, pauſe on the hints which have been already given, and they will prepare you to receive what is to be added on that head.

The MEDITATION *of a* Sinner, *who was once thoughtleſs, but begins to be awakened.*

" AWAKE, Oh my forgetful ſoul, awake from " theſe wandering dreams. Turn thee from " this chace of vanity, and for a little while be per- " ſuaded by all theſe conſiderations, to look forward, " and to look upward, at leaſt for a few moments. Suf- " ficient are the hours, and days, given to the la- " bours and amuſements of life. Grudge not a ſhort " allotment of minutes, to view thyſelf, and thine own " more immediate concerns; to reflect, who, and what " thou art; how it comes to paſs, that thou art here, " and what thou muſt quickly be!

" It is indeed, as thou haſt ſeen it now repreſented. " Oh my ſoul! Thou art the creature of GOD; form- " ed and furniſhed by him, and lodged in a body, " which he provided, and which he ſupports; a body, " in which he intended thee only a tranſitory abode. " Oh, think how ſoon this tabernacle muſt be *diſſolved* " [r], and thou muſt *return to GOD* [s]. And ſhall He, " the One, Infinite, Eternal, Ever-bleſſed, and Ever- " glorious Being, ſhall He be the leaſt of all regarded by " thee? Wilt thou live and die with this character, ſaying, " by every action of every day, unto God; Depart from " me, for I deſire not the knowledge of thy *ways* [t]? " The morning, the day, the evening, the night, every " period of time has its excuſes for this neglect. But,

" Oh,

[r] 2 Cor. v. 1. [s] Eccl. xii. 7. [t] Job xxi. 14.

" Oh, my ſoul, what will theſe excuſes appear, when " examined by his penetrating eye! They may delude " me; but they cannot impoſe upon him.

" Oh! Thou injured, neglected, provoked benefac- " tor! When I think, but for a moment or two, of all " thy greatneſs, and of all thy goodneſs, I am aſtoniſh- " ed at this inſenſibility, which hath prevailed in mine " heart, and even ſtill prevails. I bluſh and am con- " founded to lift up my face *before thee* [u]. On the " the moſt tranſient review, I ſee, that I have played " the fool, that I have *erred exceedingly* [x]. And yet " this ſtupid heart of mine would make its having ne- " glected thee ſo long, a reaſon for going on to ne- " glect thee. I own it might juſtly be expected, that, " with regard to thee, every one of thy rational crea- " tures ſhould be all duty and love: That each heart " ſhould be full of a ſenſe of thy preſence; and that " a care to pleaſe thee ſhould ſwallow up every other " care. Yet thou haſt not been in all my thoughts [y]; " and religion, the end and glory of my nature, has been " ſo ſtrangely overlooked, that I have hardly ever ſe- " rioufly aſked my own heart, what it is.—I know, if " matters reſt here, I periſh, and yet, I feel in my per- " verſe nature, a ſecret indiſpoſition to purſue theſe " thoughts; a profaneneſs, if not entirely to diſmiſs " them, yet to lay them aſide for the preſent. My mind " is perplexed and divided; but I am ſure, Thou who " madeſt me, knoweſt what is beſt for me. I there- " fore beſeech thee, that thou wilt, for thy name's ſake, " *lead me and guide me* [z]. Let me not delay, till it is " for ever too late. *Pluck me as a brand out of the burn-* " *ing* [a]. Oh break this fatal enchantment that holds " down my affection to objects, which my judgment " comparatively deſpiſes! And let me, at length, come " into ſo happy a ſtate of mind, that I may not be afraid " to think of thee, and of myſelf; and may not be

" tempted

[u] Ezr. ix. 6. [x] 1 Sam. xxvi. 21. [y] Pſal. x. 4.
[z] Pſal. xxxi. 3. [a] Amos iv. 11.

" tempted to wiſh, that thou hadſt not made me, or " that thou couldſt for ever forget me; that it may " not be my beſt hope to periſh like the brutes.

" If what I ſhall farther read here, be agreeable to " truth and reaſon; if it be calculated to promote my " happineſs, and is to be regarded as an intimation of " thy will and pleaſure to me; O GOD, let me hear " and obey! Let the words of thy ſervant, when plead- " ing thy cauſe, be like goads to pierce into my mind! " and let me rather feel, and ſmart, than die! Let " them be as *nails faſtened in a ſure place* [b]: That " whatever myſteries are as yet unknown, or whatever " difficulties there be in religion, if it be neceſſary, I " may not finally forget it; and that if it be expedient " to attend immediately to it, I may no longer delay " that attendance! And, Oh let thy grace teach me " the leſſon, I am ſo ſlow to learn; and conquer that " ſtrong oppoſition, which I feel in my heart, againſt " the very thought of it! Hear theſe broken cries, for " the ſake of thy ſon, who has taught and ſaved ma- " ny a creature as untractable as I, and can out of " *ſtones* raiſe up *children to Abraham* [c]!

[b] Eccl. xii. 11. [c] Mat. iii. 9.

CHAP III.

CHAP. III.

The awakened Sinner urged to immediate Conſideration, and cautioned againſt Delay.

Sinners when awakened, inclinable to diſmiſs convictions for the preſent. §. 1. *An immediate regard to religion urged.* §, 2. (1.) *From the excellency and pleaſure of the thing itſelf.* §. 3. (2.) *From the uncertainty of that future time on which ſinners preſume, compared with the ſad conſequences of being cut off in ſin.* §. 4. (3.) *From the immutability of GOD's preſent demands.* §. 5. (4.) *From the tendency, which delay has, to make a compliance with theſe demands more difficult than it is at preſent.*— §. 6. (5.) *From the danger of GOD's withdrawing his ſpirit, compared with the dreadful caſe of a ſinner given up by it:* §. 7. *Which probably is now the caſe with many.* §. 8. *Since therefore, on the whole, whatever the event be, delays may prove matter of lamentation.* §. 9. *The chapter concludes with an exhortation againſt yielding to them :* §. 10. *And a prayer againſt temptations of that kind.*

§. 1. I HOPE my laſt addreſs ſo far awakened the convictions of my reader, as to bring him to this purpoſe, "That ſome time or other he would attend to religious conſiderations." But give me leave to aſk earneſtly and punctually, "When that ſhall be?" *Go thy way for this time, and at a more convenient ſeaſon I will ſend for thee*, was the language, and the ruin, of unhappy *Felix* (a), when he trembled under the reaſonings, and expoſtulations of the Apoſtle. The tempter preſumed not to urge, That he ſhould give up all thoughts of repentance and reformation; but only that, conſidering the preſent hurry of his affairs (as no doubt they were many,] he ſhould defer it to a longer day. The artifice ſucceeded, and Felix was undone.

§. 2.

(a) Acts xxiv. 25.

§. 2. Will you, reader, diſmiſs me thus? For your own ſake, and out of tender compaſſion to your periſhing immortal ſoul, I would not willingly take up with ſuch a diſmiſſion, and excuſe. No, not tho' you ſhall fix a time; tho' you ſhall determine on the next year, or month, or week, or day. I would turn upon you with all the eagerneſs and tenderneſs of friendly importunity, and intreat you to bring the matter to an iſſue even now. For if you ſay, "I will think on theſe things to-"morrow," I ſhall have but little hope; and ſhall conclude, That all I have hitherto urged, and all you have read, hath been offered and viewed in vain.

§. 3. When I invited you to the care and practice of religion, it may ſeem ſtrange, that it ſhould be neceſſary for me, affectionately to plead the caſe with you, in order to your immediate regard and compliance. What I am inviting you to, is ſo noble and excellent in itſelf, ſo well worthy the dignity of our rational nature, ſo ſuitable to it, ſo manly, and ſo wiſe, that one would imagine, you ſhould take fire, as it were, at the firſt hearing of it; yea, that ſo delightful a view ſhould preſently poſſeſs your whole ſoul with a kind of indignation againſt yourſelf, that you purſued it no ſooner. "May I lift up mine eyes, and my ſoul to GOD? May "I devote myſelf to him? May I even now commence "a friendſhip with him? A friendſhip, which ſhall laſt "for ever, the ſecurity, the delight, the glory of this "immortal nature of mine?" And ſhall I draw back and ſay, "Nevertheleſs let me not commence this friend-"ſhip too ſoon: Let me live at leaſt a few weeks, or a "few days longer, without GOD in the world." Surely it would be much more reaſonable to return inward, and ſay, "Oh my ſoul, on what vile huſks haſt thou "been feeding, while thine heavenly father has been "forſaken, and injured? Shall I deſire to multiply the "days of my poverty, my ſcandal, and my miſery?" On this principle, ſurely, an immediate return to God ſhould in all reaſon be choſen, rather than to play the fool any longer, and to go on a little more to diſpleaſe GOD, and thereby to ſtarve and to wound your own ſoul, even

tho' your continuance in life were ever ſo certain, and your capacity to return to GOD and your duty ever ſo entirely in your own power, now, and in every future moment, thro' ſcores of years yet to come.

§. 4. But who, or what are you, that you ſhould lay your account for years, or for months to come? What is your life? Is it not even as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then *vaniſheth away* (b)? And what is your ſecurity, or what is your peculiar warrant, that you ſhould thus depend upon the certainty of its continuance? And that ſo abſolutely, as to venture, as it were, to pawn your ſoul upon it? Why you will perhaps ſay, "I am young, and in all my bloom and vigour: "I ſee hundreds about me, who are more than double "my age; and not a few of them, who ſeem to think "it too ſoon to attend to religion yet."—You view the living, and you talk thus. But I beſeech you, think of the dead. Return in your thoughts, to thoſe graves in which you have left ſome of your young companions, and your friends. You ſaw them a while ago gay and active; warm with life, and hopes, and ſchemes. And ſome of them would have thought a friend ſtrangely importunate, that ſhould have interrupted them in their buſineſs, and their pleaſures, with a ſolemn lecture on death and eternity. Yet they were then on the very borders of both. You have ſince ſeen their corpſes, or at leaſt their coffins; and probably carried about with you the badges of mourning, which you received at their funerals. Thoſe once vigorous, and perhaps beautiful bodies of theirs, now lie mouldering in the duſt, as ſenſeleſs, and helpleſs, as the moſt decrepid pieces of human nature, which four ſcore years ever brought down to it. And what is infinitely more to be regarded, their ſouls, whether prepared for this great change, or thoughtleſs of it, have made their appearance before GOD, and are at this moment, fixed either in heaven or in hell.—Now let me ſeriouſly aſk you, Would it be miraculous, or would it be ſtrange, if ſuch an event ſhould befall you?

(b) Jam. i. 14.

you? How are you ſure, that ſome fatal diſeaſe ſhall not this day begin to work in your veins? How are you ſure, that you ſhall ever be capable of reading or thinking any more, if you do not attend to what you now read, and purſue the thought which is now offering itſelf to your mind? This ſudden alteration may at leaſt poſſibly happen; and if it does, it will be to you a terrible one indeed. To be thus ſurpriſed into the preſence of a forgotten GOD; to be torn away, at once, from a world, to which your whole heart and ſoul has been rivetted; a world, which has engroſſed all your thoughts and cares, all your deſires and purſuits; and be fixed in a ſtate, which you never could be ſo far perſuaded to think of, as to ſpend ſo much as one hour in ſerious preparation for it: How muſt you even ſhudder at the apprehenſion of it, and with what horror muſt it fill you? It ſeems matter of wonder, that, in ſuch circumſtances, you are not almoſt diſtracted with the thoughts of the uncertainty of life, and are not even ready to die for fear of death. To triſle with GOD any longer, after ſo ſolemn an admonition as this, would be a circumſtance of additional provocation, which, after all the reſt, might be fatal: Nor is there any thing you can expect in ſuch a caſe, but that he ſhould cut you off immediately, and teach other thoughtleſs creatures, by your ruin, what a hazardous experiment they make, when they act as you are acting.

§. 5, And will you, after all, run this deſperate riſque? For what imaginable purpoſe can you do it? Do you think, the buſineſs of religion will become leſs neceſſary, or more eaſy, by your delay? You know, that it will not. You know that whatever the bleſſed GOD demands now, he will alſo demand twenty or thirty years hence, if you ſhould live to ſee the time. God hath fixed this method, in which he will pardon and accept ſinners, in his goſpel. And will He ever alter that method? Or if He will not, can men alter it? You like not to think of repenting, and humbling yourſelf before God, to receive righteouſneſs and life from his free grace in Chriſt; and you above all diſlike the thought

of returning to God in the ways of holy obedience. But will he ever diſpenſe with any of theſe, and publiſh a new goſpel, with promiſes of life and ſalvation to impenitent, unbelieving ſinners, if they will but call themſelves chriſtians, and ſubmit to a few external rites? How long, do you think, you might wait for ſuch a change in the conſtitution of things? You know, death will come upon you; and you cannot but know in your own conſcience, that a general diſſolution will come upon the world, long before God can thus deny himſelf, and contradict all his perfections, and all his declarations.

§. 6. Or if his demands continue the ſame, as they aſſuredly will, do you think, any thing, which is now diſagreable to you in them, will be leſs diſagreable hereafter, than it is at preſent? Shall you love to ſin leſs, when it is become more habitual to you, and when conſcience is yet more enfeebled and debauched? If you are running with the footmen and fainting, ſhall you be able *to contend with the horſemen* (c)? Surely you cannot imagine it. You would not ſay, in any diſtemper which threatened your life, "I will ſtay till I "grow a little worſe, and then I will apply to a phy"ſician: I will let my diſeaſe get a little more root"ing in my vitals, and then I will try what can be "done to remove it." No, it is only where the life of the ſoul is concerned, that men think thus wildly: The life and health of the body appear too precious, to be thus trifled away.

§. 7. If after ſuch deſperate experiments you are ever recovered, it muſt be by an operation of divine grace on your ſoul, yet more powerful and more wonderful, in proportion to the increaſing inveteracy of your ſpiritual maladies. And can you expect, that the Holy Spirit ſhould be more ready to aſſiſt you, in conſequence of your having ſo ſhamefully trifled with him and affronted him? He is now, in ſome meaſure, moving on your heart: If you feel any ſecret relentings in it upon what you

(c) Jer. xii. 5.

you read, it is a ſign you are not utterly forſaken: But who can tell, whether theſe are not the laſt touches he will ever give to a heart ſo long hardened againſt him? Who can tell, but God may this day *ſwear in his wrath that you ſhall not enter into his reſt* (d)? I have been telling you, that you may immediately die. You own it poſſible, you may. And can you think of any thing more terrible? Yes, ſinner, I will tell you of one thing more terrible than immediate death and immediate damnation. The bleſſed God may ſay, "As for that wretched creature, who has ſo long trifled with me, and provoked me, let him ſtill live: Let him live in the midſt of proſperity and plenty: Let him live under the pureſt and moſt powerful ordinances of the goſpel too; that he may abuſe them, to aggravate his condemnation, and die under ſevenfold guilt, and a ſevenfold curſe. I will not give him the grace to think of his ways for one ſerious moment more; but he ſhall go on from bad to worſe, filling up the meaſure of his iniquities, till death and deſtruction ſeize him in an unexpected hour, and *wrath come upon him to the uttermoſt* (e)."

§. 8. You think this an uncommon caſe; but, I fear, it is much otherwiſe. I fear there are few congregations, where the word of God has been faithfully preached, and where it has been long deſpiſed, eſpecially by thoſe whom it had once awakened, in which the eye of God does not ſee a number of ſuch wretched ſouls; tho' it is impoſſible for us to pronounce upon the caſe, who they are.

§. 9. I pretend not to ſay, how he will deal with you, Oh reader; whether he will immediately cut you off; or ſeal you up under final hardneſs and impenitency of heart; or whether his grace may, at length, awaken you, to conſider your ways, and return to him, even when your heart is grown yet more obdurate than it is at preſent. For to his Almighty grace nothing is hard, not even to transform a rock of marble into a man and

(d) Heb. iii. 18. (e) Theſſ. ii. 16.

a ſaint. But this I will confidently ſay, that if you delay any longer, the time will come, when you will bitterly repent of that delay, and either lament it before God in the anguiſh of your heart here, or curſe your own folly and madneſs in hell; yea, when you will wiſh, that, dreadful as hell is, you had rather fallen into it ſooner, than have lived in the midſt of ſo many abuſed mercies, to render the degree of your puniſhment more inſupportable, and your ſenſe of it more exquiſitely tormenting.

§. 10. I do therefore exhort you, in the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and by the worth, and, if I may ſo ſpeak, by the blood of your immortal and periſhing ſoul, that you delay not a day, or an hour longer. Far from *giving ſleep to your eyes, or ſlumber to your eyelids* (f), in the continued neglect of this important concern, take with you even now words, *and turn unto the* LORD (g); and before you quit the place where you now are, fall upon your knees in his ſacred preſence, and pour out your heart in ſuch language, or at leaſt to ſome ſuch purpoſe as this.

A PRAYER *for one, who is tempted to* delay *applying* to Religion, *tho' under ſome conviction of its importance.*

" OH Thou righteous and holy Sovereign of Hea-
" ven and earth! Thou God *in whoſe hand my*
" *breath is, and whoſe are all my Ways* (h)! I confeſs,
" I have been far from glorifying thee, or conducting
" myſelf according to the intimations, or the declara-
" tions of thy will. I have therefore reaſon to adore
" thy forbearance and goodneſs, that thou haſt not long
" ſince ſtopped my breath, and cut me off from the land
" of the living. I adore thy patience, that I have not
" months and years ago, been an inhabitant of hell;
" where ten thouſand delaying ſinners are now lament-
" ing their folly, and will be lamenting it for ever.—
" But, O God, how poſſible is it, that this trifling heart
" of

(f) Prov. vi. 4. (g) Hoſ. xiv. 1. (h) Dan. v. 23.

" of mine may, at length, betray me into the ſame ruin!
" And then, alas, into a ruin aggravated by all this pa-
" tience and forbearance of thine! I am convinced, that
" ſooner or latter religion muſt be my ſerious care, or
" I am undone. And yet my fooliſh heart draws back
" from the yoke: Yet I ſtretch myſelf upon the bed of
" ſloth, and cry out for a little more *ſleep*, a little more
" *ſlumber*, a little more *folding of the hands to ſleep* (i).
" Thus does my corrupt heart plead for its own indul-
" gence, againſt the conviction of my better judgment.
" What ſhall I ſay? O Lord ſave me from myſelf! Save
" me from the artifices and deceitfulneſs of ſin: Save
" me from the treachery of this perverſe and degene-
" rate nature of mine, and fix upon my mind what I
" have now been reading!

" O Lord I am not now inſtructed in truths, which
" were before quite unknown. Often have I been warn-
" ed of the uncertainty of life, and of the greater un-
" certainty of the day of ſalvation: And I have form-
" ed ſome light purpoſes, and have begun to take a few
" irreſolute ſteps in my way towards a return to thee.
" But, alas! I have been only, as it were, fluttering
" about religion, and have never fixed upon it. All my
" reſolutions have been ſcattered like ſmoke, or diſperſ-
" ed, like a cloudy vapour before the wind. Oh that
" thou wouldſt now bring theſe things home to my
" heart, with a more powerful conviction than it hath
" ever yet felt! O that thou wouldſt purſue me with
" them, even when I flee from them; if I ſhould ever
" grow mad enough to endeavour to eſcape them any
" more! May thy ſpirit addreſs me in the language of
" effectual terror; and add all the moſt powerful me-
" thods which thou knoweſt to be neceſſary, to awaken
" me from this lethargy, which muſt otherwiſe be mor-
" tal! May the ſound of theſe things be in mine ears,
" *when I go out, and when I come in, when I lie down, and*
" *when I riſe up* (k)! And if the repoſe of the night, and
" the buſineſs of the day be for a while interrupted by
" the

(i) Prov. vi. 10. (k) Deut. vi. 7.

" the impreſſion, be it ſo, O God! if I may but there-
" by carry on my buſineſs with thee to better purpoſe,
" and at length ſecure a repoſe in thee, inſtead of all
" that terror which I now find, when *I think upon God,*
" *and am troubled* (l).

" O Lord, *my fleſh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am*
" *afraid of thy judgments* (m). I am afraid, leſt even now,
" that I have begun to think of religion, thou ſhouldſt
" cut me off in this critical and important moment, be-
" fore my thoughts grow to any ripeneſs; and blaſt in
" eternal death, the firſt buddings and openings of it in
" my mind. But Oh ſpare me, I earneſtly intreat thee;
" for thy mercies ſake, ſpare me a little longer! It may
" be, thro' thy grace, I ſhall return. It may be, if thou
" continueſt thy patience towards me a while longer,
" there may be ſome better fruit produced by this cum-
" berer of the ground (n). And may the remembrance
" of that long forbearance, which thou haſt already ex-
" erciſed towards me, prevent my continuing to trifle
" with thee, and with my own ſoul! From this day,
" O Lord, from this moment, may I be able to date
" more laſting impreſſions of religion, than have ever
" yet been made upon my heart by all that I have ever
" read, or all that I have heard! Amen.

(l) Pſal. lxxvii. 3. (m) Pſal. cxix. 130. (n) Luke xiii. 7, 8.

CHAP IV.

CHAP. IV.

The Sinner arraigned and convicted.

Conviction of guilt neceſſary. §. 1. *A Charge of rebellion againſt GOD advanced.* §. 2. *Where it is ſhewn,* (1.) *That all men are born under GOD's law.* §. 3. (2.) *That no man hath perfectly kept it.* §. 4. *An appeal to to the reader's conſcience on this head, that he hath not.*— §. 5. (3.) *That to have broken it, is an evil inexpreſſibly great.* §. 6. *Illuſtrated by a more particular view of the aggravations of this guilt, ariſing,* (1.) *From knowledge.* §. 7. (2.) *From divine favours received.* §. 8.— (3.) *From convictions of conſcience overborne.* §. 9. (4.) *From the ſtrivings of GOD's ſpirit reſiſted.* §. 10. (5.) *From vows and reſolutions broken.* §. 11. *The charge ſummed up, and left upon the ſinner's conſcience.* §. 12. *The ſinner's confeſſion after a conviction of guilt.*

§. 1. AS I am attempting to lead you to true religion, and not merely to ſome ſuperficial form of it, I am ſenſible, I can do it no otherwiſe, than in the way of deep humiliation. And therefore, ſuppoſing you are perſuaded, thro' the divine bleſſing on what you have before read, to take it into conſideration, I would now endeavour, in the firſt place, with all the ſerioufneſs I can, to make you heartily ſenſible of your guilt before God. For I well know, that unleſs you are convinced of this, and affected with the conviction, all the proviſions of goſpel grace will be ſlighted, and your ſoul infallibly deſtroyed, in the midſt of the nobleſt means appointed for its recovery. I am fully perſuaded that thouſands live and die in a courſe of ſin, without feeling upon their hearts any ſenſe that they are ſinners; though they cannot for ſhame, but own it in words. And therefore let me deal faithfully with you, tho' I may ſeem to deal roughly; for complaiſance is not to give law to addreſſes, in which the life of your ſoul is concerned.

§. 2. Permit me therefore, O ſinner, to conſider myſelf

ſelf at this time, as an advocate of God; as one employed in his name, to plead againſt thee, and to charge thee with nothing leſs than being a rebel, and a traitor, againſt the Sovereign Majeſty of heaven and earth. However thou mayeſt be dignified or diſtinguiſhed among men; if the nobleſt blood run in thy veins; if thy ſeat were among princes, and thine arm were the *terror of the mighty in the land of the living* (a); it would be neceſſary, thou ſhouldſt be told, and told plainly, thou haſt broken the laws of the king of kings, and by the breach of it art become obnoxious to his righteous condemnation.

§. 3. Your conſcience tells you, that you were born the natural ſubject of God; born under the indiſpenſible obligations of his law. For it is moſt apparent, that the conſtitution of your rational nature, which makes you capable of receiving law from God, binds you to obey it. And it is equally evident and certain, that you have not exactly obeyed this law; nay, that you have violated it in many aggravated inſtances.

§. 4. Will you dare to deny this? Will you dare to aſſert your innocence? Remember it muſt be a compleat innocence: Yes, and a perfect righteouſneſs too; or it can ſtand you in no ſtead, farther than to prove, that, tho' a condemned ſinner, you are not quite ſo criminal as ſome others, and will not have quite ſo hot a place in hell as they. And when this is conſidered, will you plead not guilty to the charge? Search the records of your own conſcience; For God ſearcheth them: Aſk it ſeriouſly, "Have you never in your lives ſinned a-"gainſt God?" Solomon declared, that in his days *there was not a juſt man upon earth, who did good, and ſinned not* (b): And the Apoſtle Paul, that *all had ſinned, and come ſhort of the glory of* GOD (c) that both Jews and Gentiles, (which you know, comprehend the whole human race,) *were all under ſin* (d). And can you pretend any imaginable reaſon, to believe the world is grown ſo much better ſince their days, that any ſhould now

(a) Ezek. xxxii. 27. (b) Ecc. vii. 20. (c) Rom. iii. 23.
(d) Rom iii. 9.

now plead their own caſe as an exception? Or will you, however, preſume to ariſe, in the face of the omniſcient Majeſty of heaven, and ſay, I am the man.

§. 5. Suppoſing, as before, you have been free, from thoſe groſs acts of immorality, which are ſo pernicious to ſociety, that they have generally been puniſhable by human laws; can you pretend, that you have not, in ſmaller inſtances, violated the rules of piety, of temperance, and of charity? Is there any one perſon, who has intimately known you, that would not be able to teſtify, you had ſaid, or done ſomething amiſs? Or if others could not convict you, would not your own heart do it? Does it not prove you guilty of pride, of paſſion, of ſenſuality; of an exceſſive fondneſs for the world, and its enjoyments; of murmuring, or at leaſt of ſecretly repining, againſt God, under the ſtrokes of his afflicting providence; of miſpending a great deal of your time; of abuſing the gifts of God's bounty, to vain, if not (in ſome inſtances) to pernicious purpoſes; of mocking him, when you have pretended to engage in his worſhip, *drawing near to him with your mouth and your lips, while your heart* has been *far from him* (e)? Does not conſcience condemn you of ſome one breach of the law at leaſt? And by one breach of it you are in a ſenſe, a ſcriptural ſenſe, *become guilty of all* (f); and are as incapable of being juſtified before God by any obedience of your own, as if you had committed ten thouſand offences. But, in reality, there are ten thouſand, and more, chargeable to your account. When you come to reflect on all your ſins of negligence, as well as on thoſe of commiſſion; on all the inſtances in which you have *failed to do good when it was in the power of your hand to do it* (g); on all the inſtances, in which acts of devotion have been omitted, eſpecially in ſecret; and on all thoſe caſes in which you have ſhewn a ſtupid diſregard to the honour of God, and to the temporal and eternal happineſs of your fellow creatures: When all theſe, I ſay, are reviewed, the number will ſwell beyond all poſſibility

(e) Iſai. xxix. 13. (f) Jam. ii. 10. (g) Prov. iii. 27.

lity of account, and force you to cry out, *mine iniquities are more than the hairs of my head* (h). They will appear in ſuch a light before you, that your own heart will charge you with countleſs multitudes; and how much more then *that GOD, who is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things* (i).

§. 6. And ſay, ſinner, Is it, a little thing, that you have preſumed to ſet light by the authority of the God of heaven, and to violate his law, if it had been by mere careleſsneſs and inattention? How much more heinous, therefore, is the guilt, when in ſo many inſtances you have done it knowingly, and wilfully? Give me leave ſeriouſly to aſk you, and let me intreat you to aſk your own ſoul, *Againſt whom haſt thou magnified thyſelf? Againſt whom haſt thou exalted thy voice* (k), or lifted up thy rebellious hand? On whoſe law, Oh ſinner, haſt thou preſumed to trample? And whoſe friendſhip, and whoſe enmity haſt thou thereby dared to affront? Is it a man like thyſelf that thou haſt inſulted? Is it only a temporal monarch? Only one, *who can kill the body, and then hath no more that he can do* (l)? Nay, ſinner, thou would not have dared to treat a temporal prince, as thou haſt treated the *King eternal, immortal,* and *inviſible* (m). No price could have hired thee, to deal by the majeſty of an earthly ſovereign, as thou haſt dealt by that God, before whom the cherubim and ſeraphim are continually bowing.—Not one oppoſing or complaining, diſputing or murmuring word is heard among all the celeſtial legions, when the intimations of his will are publiſhed to them. And who art thou, Oh wretched man? Who art thou, that thou ſhouldſt oppoſe him? That thou ſhouldſt oppoſe and provoke a God of infinite power and terror, who needs but exert one ſingle act of his ſovereign will, and thou art in a moment ſtripped of every poſſeſſion; cut off from every hope; deſtroyed and rooted up from exiſtence, if that were his pleaſure; or, what is inconceivably worſe, conſigned over to the ſevereſt and moſt laſting agonies? Yet, this is the God whom thou haſt offended;

(n) Hoſ. viii. 12.
(o) Jam. iv. 17.
(p) Iſai. xl. 28.
(q) Rom. i. 32.

offended; whom thou haſt affronted to his face, preſuming to violate his expreſs laws in his very preſence: This is the God before whom thou ſtandeſt as a convicted criminal; convicted not of one or two particular offences, but of thouſands and ten thouſands; of a courſe and ſeries of rebellions and provocations, in which thou haſt perſiſted, more or leſs, ever ſince thou waſt born; and the particulars of which have been attended, with almoſt every conceivable circumſtance of aggravation; Reflect on particulars; and deny the charge if you can.

§. 7. If knowledge be an aggravation of guilt, thy guilt, O ſinner, is greatly aggravated! For thou waſt born in Emmanuel's land, and God hath written to thee the great things of his law, yet thou haſt accounted them *as a ſtrange thing* (n). Thou haſt known to do good, *and haſt not done it* (o); and therefore to thee the omiſſion of it has been ſin indeed. *Haſt thou not known? Haſt thou not heard* (p)? Waſt thou not early taught the will of God, in thine infant years? Haſt thou not ſince received repeated leſſons, by which it has been inculcated again and again, in public and in private, by preaching and reading the word of God? Nay, hath not thy duty been in ſome inſtances, ſo plain, that even without any inſtruction at all, thine own reaſon might eaſily have inferred it? And haſt thou not alſo been warned of the conſequences of diſobedience? Haſt thou not known the righteous judgment of God, that they who commit ſuch things *are worthy of death* (q)? Yet thou haſt, perhaps, not only done the ſame, but haſt taken pleaſure in thoſe that do them; haſt choſen them for thy moſt intimate friends and companions; ſo as thereby to ſtrengthen by the force of example and converſe, the hands of each other in your iniqities.

§. 8. Nay more, If divine love and mercy be any aggravation of the ſins committed againſt it, thy crimes, O ſinner, are heinouſly aggravated. Muſt thou not acknowledge

(n) Hoſ. viii. 12. (o) Jam. iv. 17. (p) Iſai. xl. 28.
(q) Rom. i. 32.

knowledge it, O fooliſh creature and unwiſe? Haſt thou not been nouriſhed and brought up by him as his child, and yet haſt *rebelled againſt him* (r)? Did not God *take you out of the womb* (s)? Did he not watch over you in your infant days, and guard you from a multitude of dangers, which the moſt careful parent or nurſe could not have obſerved, or warded off? Has he not given you your rational powers? And is it not by him you have been favoured with every opportunity of improving them? Has he not every day ſupplied your wants, with an unwearied liberality; and added, with reſpect to many who will read this, the delicacies of life to its neceſſary ſupports? Has he not heard your cry, *when trouble came upon you* (t); and frequently appeared for your deliverance, when in the diſtreſſes of nature you have called upon him for help? Has he not reſcued you from ruin, when it ſeemed juſt ready to ſwallow you up; and healed your diſeaſes, when it ſeemed to all about you, that *the reſidue of your days was cut off in the midſt* (u)? Or, if it had not been ſo, is not this long continued, and uninterrupted health, which you have enjoyed for ſo many years, to be acknowledged as an equivalent obligation? Look round upon all your poſſeſſions, and ſay, What one thing have you in the world, which his goodneſs did not give you, and which it hath not thus far preſerved to you? Add to all this, the kind notices of his will which he hath ſent you; the tender expoſtulations which he hath uſed with you, to bring you to a wiſer and better temper; and the diſcoveries and gracious invitations of his goſpel, which you have heard, and which you have deſpiſed: And then ſay, whether your rebellion has not been aggravated by the vileſt ingratitude, and whether that aggravation can be accounted ſmall?

§. 9. Again, if it be any aggravation of ſin to be committed againſt conſcience, thy crimes, O ſinner, have been ſo aggravated. Conſult the records of it; and then diſpute

(r) Iſai. i. 2. (s) Pſal. xxii. 9. (t) Job xxvii. 9.
(u) Pſal. cii. 24.——Iſai. xxxviii. 10.

diſpute the fact, if you can. There is a ſpirit in man, and the inſpiration of the Almighty *giveth him underſtanding* (w); and that underſtanding will act, and a ſecret conviction of being accountable to its maker and preſerver is inſeperable from the actings of it. It is eaſy to object to human remonſtrances, and to give things falſe colourings before men; but the heart often condemns, while the tongue excuſes. Have you not often found it ſo? Has not conſcience remonſtrated againſt your paſt conduct, and have not theſe remonſtrances been very painful too? I have been aſſured by a gentleman of undoubted credit, that when he was in the purſuit of all the gayeſt ſenſualities of life, and was reckoned one of the happieſt of mankind, he has ſeen a dog come into the room where he was among his merry companions, and has groaned inwardly, and ſaid, "Oh that I had been that dog!' And haſt thou ſinner, felt nothing like this? Has thy conſcience been ſo *ſtupified*, ſo *ſeared with a hot iron* (x), that it has never cried out of any of the violences wich have been done it? Has it never warned thee of the fatal conſequences of what thou haſt done in oppoſition to it? Theſe warnings are, in effect, the voice of God; they are the admonitions which he gave thee by his vicegerent in thy breaſt. And when his ſentence for thy evil works is executed upon thee in everlaſting death, thou ſhalt hear that voice ſpeaking to thee again, in a louder tone, and a ſeverer accent than before: And thou ſhalt be tormented with its upbraidings through eternity, becauſe thou wouldſt not, in time, hearken to its admonition.

§. 10. Let me add further, if it be any aggravation, that ſin has been committed after God has been moving by his ſpirit on the mind, ſurely your ſin has been attended with that aggravation too. Under the Moſaic diſpenſation, dark and imperfect as it was, the ſpirit ſtrove with the Jews; elſe Stephen could not have charged it upon them, that thr'o all their generations, *they had always reſiſted him* (y). Now ſurely we may much

[w] Job xxii. 8. (x) 1 Tim. iv. 2. [y] Acts vii. 51.

more reaſonably apprehend, that he ſtrives with ſinners under the goſpel. And have you never experienced any thing of this kind, even when there has been no external circumſtance to awaken you, nor any pious teacher near you? Have you never perceived ſome ſecret impulſe upon your mind, leading you to think of religion, urging you to an immediate conſideration of it, ſweetly inviting you to make trial of it, and warning you that you would lament this ſtupid neglect? O ſinner, why were not theſe happy motions attended to? Why did you not, as it were, ſpread out all the ſails of your ſoul to catch that heavenly, that favourable breeze? But you have careleſsly neglected it: You have overborne theſe kind influences: How reaſonably then might the ſentence have gone forth in righteous diſpleaſure, *my ſpirit ſhall no more ſtrive* (z). And indeed, who can ſay, that it is not already gone forth? If you feel no ſecret agitation of mind, no remorſe, no awakening, while you read ſuch a remonſtrance as this, there will be room, great room to ſuſpect it.

§. 11. There is indeed one aggravation more, which may not attend your guilt; I mean, that of being committed againſt ſolemn covenant engagements: A circumſtance, which has lain heavy on the conſciences of many, who, perhaps in the main ſeries of their lives, have ſerved God with great integrity. But let me call you to think, to what is this owiug? Is it not, that you have never perſonally made any ſolemn profeſſion of devoting yourſelf to God at all? have never done any thing, which has appeared to your own apprehenſion an action by which you made a covenant with him; tho' you have heard ſo much of his covenant, tho' you have been ſo ſolemnly and ſo tenderly invited into it? And in this view, how monſtrous muſt this circumſtance appear, which at firſt was mentioned as ſome alleviation of guilt? Yet I muſt add, that you are not perhaps altogether ſo free from guilt on this head, as you may at firſt imagine. I will not inſiſt on the covenant, which your parents made in your

[z] Gen. vi. 3.

your name, when they devoted you to God in baptiſm; tho' it is really a weighty matter, and by calling yourſelf a chriſtian you have profeſſed to own and avow what they then did. But I would remind you, of what may have been more perſonal and expreſs. Has your heart been, even from your youth, hardened to ſo uncommon a degree, that you have never cried to God in any ſeaſon of danger and difficulty? And did you never mingle vows with thoſe cries? Did you never promiſe, that if God would hear and help you in that hour of extremity, you would forſake your ſins, and ſerve him as long as you lived? He heard and helped you, or you had not been reading theſe lines; and, by ſuch deliverance, did, as it were, bind down your vows upon you; and therefore your guilt in the violation of them remains before him, tho' you are ſtupid enough to forget them. Nothing is forgotten, nothing is overlooked by him; and the day will come, when the record ſhall be laid before you too.

§. 12. And now, O ſinner, think ſeriouſly with thyſelf, what defence thou wilt make to all this! Prepare thine apology; call thy witneſſes; make thine appeal from him whom thou haſt thus offended, to ſome ſuperior judge, if ſuch there be. Alas, thoſe apologies are ſo weak and vain, that one of thy fellow-worms may eaſily detect and confound them; as I will endeavour preſently to ſhew thee. But thy foreboding conſcience already knows the iſſue. Thou art convicted; convicted of the moſt aggravated offences. Thou haſt not humbled thine heart, but lifted up thyſelf againſt the *Lord of heaven* (a); and thy ſentence ſhall come forth *from his preſence* (b). Thou haſt violated his known law; thou haſt deſpiſed and abuſed his numberleſs mercies; thou haſt affronted conſcience, his vicegerent in thy ſoul; thou haſt reſiſted and grieved the ſpirit; thou haſt trifled with him in all thy pretended ſubmiſſions; and in one word, and that his own, *thou haſt done evil things as thou couldeſt* (c). Thouſands are, no doubt, already in hell, whoſe

[a] Dan. v. 22—23. [d] Pſalm xvii. 2. [c] Jer. iii. v.

guilt never equalled thine; and 'tis aſtoniſhing, that God has ſpared thee to read this repreſentation of the caſe, or to make any pauſe upon it. Oh waſte not ſo precious a moment, but enter, as attentively, and as humbly as thou canſt, into thoſe reflections, which ſuit a caſe ſo lamentable, and ſo terrible as thine!

The CONFESSION *of a Sinner, convinced in general of his guilt.*

"O GOD! Thou injured Sovereign, thou all pene-
" trating and Almighty judge! What ſhall I
" ſay to his charge? Shall I pretend, I am wronged by
" it, and ſtand on the defence in thy preſence? I dare
" not do it; for thou knoweſt my fooliſhneſs, and *none*
" *of my ſins are hid from thee* [d]. My conſcience tells me,
" that a denial of my crimes would only increaſe them,
" and add new fuel to the fire of thy deſerved wrath. If
" I juſtify myſelf, mine own mouth will condemn me;
" if I ſay, I am perfect, it will alſo *prove me perverſe*
" [e]. For inumerable evils have compaſſed me about:
" Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, ſo that I
" am not able to look up: They are, as I have been
" told in thy name, more than the hairs of my head,
" and *therefore my heart faileth me* [f]. I am more guilty,
" than is poſſible for another to declare or repreſent.
" My heart ſpeaks more than any other accuſer. And
" thou, O Lord, art much greater than my heart, *and*
" *knoweſt all things* [g].

" What has my life been but a courſe of rebellion
" againſt thee? It is not this or that particular action
" alone, I have to lament. Nothing has been right in
" its principles, views, and ends. My whole ſoul has
" been diſordered. All my thoughts, my affections,
" my deſires, my purſuits, have been wretchedly alie-
" nated from thee. I have acted, as if I had hated
" thee, who art infinitely the loveliеſt of all beings;
" as

[d] Pſalm lxix. 5. [e] Job ix. 20. [f] Pſalm xl. 12.
[g] 1 John iii. 20.

" as if I had been contriving, how I might tempt thee
" to the uttermoſt, and wear out thy patience, mar-
" vellous as it is. My actions have been evil; my
" words yet more evil than they; and, O bleſſed God,
" my heart, how much more corrupt than either! What
" an inexhauſted fountain of ſin has there been in it?
" A fountain of original corruption, which mingled its
" bitter ſtreams with the days of early childhood; and
" which, alas, flows on even to this very day, beyond
" what actions or words could expreſs. I ſee this to
" have been the caſe, with regard to what I can parti-
" cularly ſurvey. But Oh, how many months and years
" have I forgotten? concerning which I only know
" this, in the general, that they are much like thoſe I
" can remember; except it be, that I have been grow-
" ing worſe and worſe, and provoking thy patience
" more and more, tho' every new exerciſe of it was
" more and more wonderful.

" And how am I aſtoniſhed, that thy forbearance is
" ſtill continued! It is, becauſe thou art God, *and not*
" *man* [h]. Had I, a ſinful worm, been thus injured,
" I could not have endured it. Had I been a prince,
" I had long ſince done juſtice on any rebel, whoſe
" crimes had borne but a diſtant reſemblance to mine.
" Had I been a parent, I had long ſince caſt off the un-
" grateful child, who had made me ſuch a return as I
" have all my life long been making to thee, O thou
" father of my ſpirit! The flame of natural affection
" would have been extinguiſhed; and his ſight, and
" his very name, would have become hateful to me.
" Why then, O Lord, am I not *caſt out from thy pre-*
" *ſence* [i]? Why am I not ſealed up under an irre-
" verſible ſentence of deſtruction! That I live, I owe
" to thine indulgence. But Oh, if there be yet any
" way of deliverance, if there be yet any hope for ſo
" guilty a creature, may it be opened upon me by thy
" goſpel and thy grace! And if any farther alarm, hu-
" miliation, and terror, be neceſſary to my ſecurity and
" ſalvation,

[h] Hoſ. xi 9. [i] Jer. lii. 3.

" ſalvation, may I meet them, and bear them all!
" Wound mine heart, O Lord, ſo that thou wilt but
" afterwards heal it; and break it in pieces, if thou
" wilt but at length condeſcend *to bind it up* [k]!"

[k] Hoſ. vi. 1.

CHAP. V.

The Sinner ſtripped of his vain pleas.

The vanity of thoſe pleas, which ſinners may ſecretly confide in ſo apparent, that they will be aſhamed at laſt to mention them before GOD. §. 1—2. *Such as,* [1.] *That they deſcended from pious parents.* §. 3. [2.] *That they had attended to the ſpeculative part of religion.* §. 4. [3.] *That they had entertained ſound notions.* §. 5. 4. *That they had expreſſed a zealous regard to religion, and attended the outward forms of worſhip with thoſe they apprehended the pureſt churches.* §. 6—7. [5.] *That they had been free from groſs immoralities.* §. 8. [6.] *That they did not think the conſequence of neglecting religion would have been ſo fatal.* §. 9. [7.] *That they could not do otherwiſe than they did.* §. 10. *Concluſion.* §. 11. *With the meditation of a convinced ſinner giving up his vain pleas before GOD.*

§. 1. MY laſt diſcourſe left the ſinner in a very alarming, and a very pitiable circumſtance, a criminal convicted at the bar of God, diſarmed of all pretences to perfect innocence and ſinleſs obedience, and conſequently obnoxious to the ſentence of a holy law, which can make no allowance for any tranſgreſſion, no, not for the leaſt; but pronounces, death, and a curſe, againſt every act of diſobedience; How much more then againſt thoſe numberleſs and aggravated acts of rebellion, of which, O ſinner, thy conſcience hath condemned thee before God? I would hope, ſome of my readers will ingenuouſly fall under the conviction, and not think of making any apology: For ſure I am, that humbly to plead guilty at the divine bar, is the moſt decent, and, all

all things conſidered, the moſt prudent thing that can be done in ſuch an unhappy circumſtance. Yet I know the treachery, and the ſelf-flattery of a ſinful and corrupted heart. I know what excuſes it makes, and how, when it is driven from one refuge, it flies to another, to fortify itſelf againſt conviction, and to perſuade, not merely another, but itſelf, "That if it has been in ſome "inſtances to blame, it is not quite ſo criminal as was "repreſented: That there are at leaſt conſiderations "that plead in its favour, which, if they cannot juſ-"tify, will in ſome degree excuſe." A ſecret reſerve of this kind, ſometimes perhaps ſcarce formed into a diſtinct reflection, breaks the force of conviction, and often prevents that deep humiliation before God, which is the happieſt token of approachiug deliverance. I will therefore examine into ſome of theſe particulars; and for that purpoſe will ſeriouſly aſk thee, O ſinner, What thou haſt to offer in arreſt of judgment? What plea thou canſt urge for thyſelf, why the ſentence of God ſhould not go forth againſt thee, and why thou ſhouldſt not fall into the hands of his juſtice?

§. 2. But this I premiſe, that the queſtion is not, how thou wouldſt anſwer to me, a weak ſinful worm like thyſelf, who am ſhortly to ſtand with thee at the ſame bar: (*The Lord grant, that I may find mercy of the Lord in that day* [a]! But, what wilt thou reply to thy judge? What couldſt thou plead, if thou waſt now actually before his tribunal; where, to multiply vain words, and to frame idle apologies would be but to increaſe thy guilt and provocation? Surely the very thought of his preſence muſt ſuperſede a thouſand of thoſe trifling excuſes, which now ſometimes impoſe on a generation that are pure in their own eyes, tho' they *are not waſhed from their filthineſs* [b]: Or while they are conſcious of their own impurities, *truſt in words that cannot profit* [c], and *lean upon broken reeds* [d].

§. 3. You will not, to be ſure, in ſuch a circumſtance plead,

[a] 2 Tim. i. 18. [b]. Prov. xxx. 12. [c] Jer. vii. 8.
[d] Iſai. xxxvi. 6.

plead, "that you are deſcended from pious parents." That was indeed your privilege; and woe be to you that you have abuſed it, *and forſaken the GOD of your fathers* [e]. Iſhmael was immediately deſcended from Abraham the friend of God; and Eſau was the ſon of Iſaac, who was born according to the promſe: Yet you know they were both cut off from the bleſſing, to which they apprehended they had a kind of hereditary claim. You may remember that our Lord does not only ſpeak of one who could call Abraham father, who was *tormented in flames* [f]; but expreſsly declares, that many of the children of the kingdom ſhall be ſhut out of it; and when others come from the moſt diſtant parts to ſit down in it, ſhall be diſtinguiſhed from their companions in miſery, only by louder lamentation, and more furious *gnaſhing of the teeth* [g].

§. 4. Nor will you then preſume to plead, "that you "had exerciſed your thoughts about the ſpeculative part "of religion" For to what end can this ſerve, but to increaſe your condemnation! Since you have broken God's law, ſince you have contradicted the moſt obvious and apparent obligations of religion, to have enquired into it, and argued upon it, is a circumſtance that proves your guilt more audacious. What? did you think religion was merely an exerciſe of man's wit, and the amuſement of their curioſity? If you argued about it, on the principles of common ſenſe, you muſt have judged and proved it to be a practical thing: And if it was ſo, why did not you practiſe accordingly? You knew the particular branches of it: And why then did you not attend to every one of them? To have pleaded an unavoidable ignorance, would have been the happieſt plea that could have remained for you: Nay, an actual, tho' faulty ignorance, would have been ſome little allay of your guilt. But if, by your own confeſſion, you have known your maſter's will, and have not done it, you bear witneſs againſt yourſelf, that you deſerve to *be beaten with many ſtripes* [h].

§. 5.

[e] 2 Chron. vii. 22. [f] Luke xvi. 24. [g] Mat. viii. 11—13.
[h] Luke xii. 47.

§. 5. Nor yet again will it ſuffice to ſay, "that you "have had right notions, both of the doctrines and the "precepts of religion." Your advantage for practiſing it was therefore the greater: But underſtanding, and acting right, can never go for the ſame thing, in the judgment of God or of man. In believing there is one God, you have done well; but the devils alſo *believe*, and *tremble* [i]. In acknowledging Chriſt to be the Son of God and the Holy One, you have done well too; but you know the unclean ſpirits made this very orthodox confeſſion [k], and yet they are reſerved in everlaſting chains, under darkneſs, unto the judgment of the *great day* [l]. And will you place any ſecret confidence in that, which might be pleaded by the infernal ſpirits, as well as by you?

§. 6. But perhaps you may think of pleading "that "you have actually done ſomething in religion." Having judged what faith was the ſoundeſt, and what worſhip the pureſt, "You entered yourſelf into thoſe ſo-"cieties, where ſuch articles of faith were profeſſed, "and ſuch forms of worſhip were practiſed; and a-"mong thoſe you have ſignalized yourſelf, by the ex-"actneſs of your attendance, by the zeal with which "you have eſpouſed their cauſe, and by the earneſtneſs "with which you have contended for ſuch principles "and practices."—O ſinner, I much fear that this zeal of thine, about the circumſtantials of religion will ſwell thine account, rather than be allowed in abatement of it. He that ſearches thine heart, knows from whence it aroſe, and how far it extended Perhaps he ſees that it was all hypocriſy; an artful veil, under which thou waſt carrying on thy mean deſigns for this world while the ſacred names of God and religion were profaned and proſtituted in the baſeſt manner: And if ſo, thou art curſed with a diſtinguiſhed curſe, for ſo daring an inſult on the divine omniſcience, as well as juſtice. Or perhaps the earneſtneſs with which you have been contending for the faith and worſhip, which was once delivered

[i] Jam. ii. 19. [k] Luke iv. 34—41. [l] Jude ver. 6.

delivered *to the Saints* [m], or which 'tis poſſible you may have raſhly concluded to be that, might be mere pride and bitterneſs of ſpirit: And all the zeal you have expreſſed might poſſibly ariſe from a confidence of your own judgment, from an impatience of contradiction, or ſome ſecret malignity of ſpirit which delighted itſelf in condemnation, and even in worrying others; yea, which (if I may be allowed the expreſſion,) fiercely preyed upon religion, as the tyger upon the lamb, to turn it into a nature moſt contrary to its own. And ſhall this ſcreen you before the great tribunal? Shall it not rather awaken the diſpleaſure, it is pleaded to avert?

§. 7. But ſay, that this zeal for notions and forms has been ever ſo well intended, and ſo far as it has gone, ever ſo well conducted too; what will that avail towards vindicating thee in ſo many inſtances of negligence and diſobedience, as are recorded againſt thee in the book of God's remembrance? Were the revealed doctrines of the goſpel to be earneſtly maintained, (as indeed they ought;) and was the great practical purpoſe for which they were revealed to be forgot? Was the very mint and anniſe, and cummin to be tithed, and were the weightier matters of the law to be omitted [n]; even that love to God, which is its great and firſt command [o]? Oh how wilt thou be able to vindicate even the juſteſt ſentence thou haſt paſſed on others for their infidelity, or for their diſobedience, without being condemned *out of thine own mouth* [p]!

§. 8. Will you then plead "your fair moral character, "your works of righteouſneſs and of mercy?" Had your obedience to the law of God been compleat, the plea might be allowed, as important and valid. But I have ſuppoſed and proved above, that conſcience teſtifies to the contrary; and you will not now dare to contradict it. I add farther, had theſe works of yours, which you now urge, proceeded from a ſincere love to God, and a genuine faith in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, you would not have

[m] Jude ver. 3. [n] Mat. xxiii. 23. [o] Mat. xxii. 38.
[p] Luke xix. 22.

have thought of pleading them, any otherwiſe than as an evidence of your intereſt in the goſpel covenant, and in the bleſſings of it, procured by the righteouſneſs and blood of the redeemer: And that faith, had it been ſincere, would have been attended with ſuch deep humility, and with ſuch ſolemn apprehenſions of the divine holineſs and glory, that inſtead of pleading any works of your own before God, you would rather have implored his pardon, for the mixture of ſinful imperfection attending the very beſt of them. Now, as you are a ſtranger to this humbling and ſanctifying principle, (which here, in this addreſs, I ſuppoſe my reader to be,) it is abſolutely neceſſary you ſhould be plainly and faithfully told, that neither ſobriety, nor honeſty, nor humanity, will juſtify you before the tribunal of God, when he lays *judgment to the line, and righteouſneſs to the plummet* (q), and examines all your actions, and all your thoughts, with the ſtricteſt ſeverity. You have not been a drunkard, an adulterer, or a robber. So far is well. You ſtand before a righteous God, who will do you ample juſtice; and therefore will not condemn you for drunkenneſs, adultery, or robbery. But you have forgotten him, your parent and your benefactor; you have *caſt off fear, and reſtrained prayer before him* (r); you have deſpiſed the blood of his ſon, and all the immortal bleſſings that he purchaſed with it. For this therefore are you judged, and condemned. And as for any thing that has looked like virtue and humanity in your temper and conduct, the exerciſe of it has in a great meaſure been its own reward, if there were any thing more than form and artifice in it; and the various bounties of divine providence to you amidſt all the numberleſs provocations, have been a thouſand times more than an equivalent for ſuch defective virtues as theſe. You remain therefore chargeable with the guilt of a thouſand offences, for which you have no excuſe; tho' there are ſome other inſtances, in which you did not groſsly offend. And thoſe good works, in which you have been ſo ready to

(q) Iſai. xxviii. 17. (r) Job. xv. 4.

truſt, will no more vindicate you in his awful preſence, than a man's kindneſs to his poor neighbours would be allowed as a plea in arreſt of judgment, when he ſtood convicted of high treaſon againſt his prince.

§. 9. But you will, perhaps, be ready to ſay, "You "did not expect all this: You did not think the conſe- "quences of neglecting religion would have been ſo "fatal." And why did you not think it? Why did you not examine more attentively, and more impartially? Why did you ſuffer the pride and folly of your vain heart, to take up with ſuch ſuperficial appearances, and truſt the light ſuggeſtions of your own prejudiced mind againſt the expreſs declaration of the word of God? Had you reflected on his character, as the ſupreme Governor of the world, you would have ſeen the neceſſity of ſuch a day of retribution, as we are now referring to. Had you regarded the ſcripture, the divine authority of which you profeſſed to believe, every page might have taught you to expect it. "You did not think of "religion: And of what were you thinking, when you forgot, or neglected it? Had you too much employment of another kind? Of what kind, I beſeech you? What end could you propoſe by any thing elſe, of equal moment? Nay, with all your engagements, conſcience will tell you, that there have been ſeaſons, when for want of thought, time and life have been a burden to you: Yet, you guarded againſt thought as an enemy, and caſt up (as it were) an intrenchment of inconſideration around you on every ſide, as if it had been to defend you from the moſt dangerous invaſion. God knew you were thoughtleſs, and therefore he ſent you *line upon line, and precept upon precept* (s), in ſuch plain language, that it needed no genius or ſtudy to underſtand it. He tried you too with afflictions, as well as with mercies, to awaken you out of your fatal lethargy: And yet, when awakened, you would lie down again upon the bed of ſloth. And now, pleaſing as your dreams might be, *you muſt lie down in ſorrow* (t). Reflection has at laſt

(s) Iſai. xxviii. 10.

(t) Iſai. l. 11.

laſt overtaken you, and muſt be heard as a tormentor, ſince it might not be heard as a friend.

§. 10. But ſome may perhaps imagine, that one important apology is yet unheard, and that there may be room to ſay, "You were by the neceſſity of your nature, "impelled to thoſe things, which are now charged up- "on you as crimes; whereas it was not in your power "to have avoided them, in the circumſtances in which "you are placed." If this will do any thing, it indeed promiſes to do much; ſo much, that it will amount to nothing. If I were diſpoſed to anſwer you upon the folly and madneſs of your own principles, I might ſay, that the ſame conſideration, which proves it was neceſſary for you to offend, proves alſo that it is neceſſary for God to puniſh you; and that indeed, he cannot but do it: And I might farther ſay, with an excellent writer of our own age*, "That the ſame principles which deſtroy the "injuſtice of ſins, deſtroy the injuſtice of puniſhment "too." But if you cannot admit this, if you ſhould ſtill reply in ſpite of principle, that it muſt be unjuſt to puniſh you for an action utterly and abſolutely unavoidable; I really think, you would anſwer right. But in that anſwer you would contradict your own ſcheme, (as I obſerved above;) and I leave your conſcience to judge, what ſort of a ſcheme that muſt be, which would make all kind of puniſhment unjuſt: For the argument will on the whole be the ſame, whether with regard to human puniſhment or divine. 'Tis a ſcheme full of confuſion and horror. You would not, I am ſure, take it from a ſervant who had robbed you, and then fired your houſe: You would never inwardly believe, that he could not have helped it; or think, that he had fairly excuſed himſelf by ſuch a plea. And I am perſuaded, you would have been ſo far from preſuming to offer it to God at the great day, that you would not venture to turn it into a prayer even now. Imagine, that you ſaw a malefactor dying, with ſuch words as theſe in his mouth: "O God, "it is true, I did indeed rob and murder my fellow-

* Bp. of Briſtol's Analogy, &c. Page 135. Octavo Edit.

" creatures; but thou knoweſt, that, as my circum-
" ſtances were ordered, I could not do otherwiſe: My
" will was irreſiſtably determined by the motives which
" thou didſt ſet before me; and I could as well have
" ſhaken the foundations of the earth, or darkened the
" ſun in the firmament, as have reſiſted the impulſe
" which bore me on." I put it to your conſcience, whether you would not look on ſuch a ſpeech as this with deteſtation, as one enormity added to another. Yet if the excuſe would have any weight in your mouth, it would have equal weight in his; or would be equally applicable to any the moſt ſhocking occaſion. But indeed it is ſo contrary to the plaineſt principles of common reaſon, that I can hardly perſuade myſelf, any one could ſeriouſly and thoroughly believe it; and ſhould imagine my time very ill employed here, if I were to ſet myſelf to combat thoſe pretences to argument, by which the wantonneſs of human wit, has attempted to varniſh it over.

§. 11. You ſee then, on the whole, the vanity of all your pleas, and how eaſily the moſt plauſible of them might be ſilenced, by a mortal man, like yourſelf: How much more then by him, who ſearches all hearts, and can, in a moment, flaſh in upon the conſcience a moſt powerful and irreſiſtible conviction? What then can you do, while you ſtand convicted in the preſence of God? What ſhould you do, but hold your peace under an inward ſenſe of your inexcuſable guilt, and prepare yourſelf to hear the ſentence which his law pronounces againſt you? You muſt feel the execution of it, if the goſpel does not at length deliver you; and you muſt feel ſomething of the terror of it, before you can be excited to ſeek to that goſpel for deliverance.

The MEDITATION *of a* Convinced Sinner, *giving up his vain Pleas before* GOD.

" DEPLORABLE condition, to which I am " in-
" deed reduced! I have ſinned; and what
" ſhall

" ſhall I ſay unto thee, *O thou preſerver of men* (u)?
" What ſhall I dare to ſay? Fool that I was, to amuſe
" myſelf with ſuch trifling excuſes as theſe, and to
" imagine, they could have any weight in thy tremend-
" ous preſence; or that I ſhould be able ſo much as
" to mention them there! I cannot preſume to do it.—
" I am ſilent and confounded. My hopes, alas, are
" ſlain; and my ſoul itſelf is ready to die too; ſo far as
" an immortal ſoul can die: And I am almoſt ready to
" ſay, O that it could die entirely! I am indeed a cri-
" minal in the hand of juſtice, quite diſarmed, and ſtrip-
" ed of the weapons in which I truſted. Diſſimula-
" tion can only add provocation to provocation. I will
" therefore plainly and freely own it. I have acted,
" as if I thought God was altogether ſuch a one as my-
" ſelf: But he hath ſaid, I will reprove thee; I will ſet
" thy ſins *in order before thine eyes* (x), will marſhal them
" in battle array. And oh, what a terrible kind of hoſt
" do they appear? And how do they ſurround me be-
" yond all poſſibility of an eſcape! Oh my ſoul, they
" have, as it were, taken thee priſoner; and they are
" bearing thee away to the divine tribunal.

" Thou muſt appear before it! Thou muſt ſee the
" awful eternal judge, who *tries the very reins* (y); and
" who needs no other evidence, for he has himſelf been
" *witneſs* (z) to all thy rebellion. Thou muſt ſee him, O
" my ſoul, ſitting in judgment upon thee: And when he
" is ſtrict to *mark iniquity* (a), how wilt thou anſwer him
" for *one of a thouſand* (b)! And if thou canſt not an-
" ſwer him, in what language will *he ſpeak to thee?* Lord,
" as things at preſent ſtand, I can expect no other lan-
" guage than that of condemation. And what a condem-
" nation it is! Let me reflect upon it! Let me read
" my ſentence before I hear it finally and irreverſibly
" paſſed! I know, he has recorded it in his word; and
" I know, in the general, that the repreſentation is made
" with a gracious deſign. I know, that he would have
" us alarmed, that we may not be deſtroyed. Speak to

(n) Job vii. 20. (x) Pſal. l. 21. (y) Jer. xvii. 10.
(z) Jer. xxix. 23. (a) Pſal. cxxx. 3. (b) Job ix. 3.

" me, therefore, O God, while thou ſpeakeſt not for " the laſt time, and in circumſtances when thou wilt " hear me no more. Speak in the language of effectual " terror, ſo that it be not to ſpeak me into final deſpair. " And let thy word, however painful in its operation, " be quick and powerful, and *ſharper than any two-* " *edged ſword* (c). Let me not vainly flatter myſelf: " Let me not be left a wretched prey to thoſe who " would *propheſy ſmooth things to me* (d), till I am ſealed " up under wrath, and feel thy juſtice piercing my ſoul, " and the poiſon of thine arrows drinking up all my ſpi- " rits (e),

" Before I enter upon the particular view, I know " in the general, that it is a terrible thing to fall into " the *hands of the living GOD* (f). O thou living God, " in one ſenſe I am already fallen into thine hands. I " am become obnoxious to thy diſpleaſure, juſtly ob- " noxious to it; and whatever thy ſentence may be when " it comes forth from *thy preſence* (g), I muſt condemn " myſelf and juſtify thee. Thou canſt not treat me " with more ſeverity than mine iniquities have deſerved: " And how bitter ſoever that *cup of trembling* may be (h), " which thou ſhalt appoint for me, I give judgment a- " gainſt myſelf, that I deſerve to *wring out the very dregs* " *of it* (i)."

(c) Heb. iv. 12.
(d) Iſai. xxx. 10.
(e) Job. vi. 4.
(f) Heb. x. 31
(g) Pſal. 17. 2.
(h) Iſai. li. 17.
(i) Pſal. lxxv. 8.

CHAP. VI.

CHAP. VI.

The SINNER Sentenced.

The ſinner called upon to hear his ſentence. §. 1—2. *GOD's law does now in general pronounce a curſe:* §. 3. *It pronounces death,* §. 4. *And being turned into hell.* §. 5. *The judgment-day ſhall come.* §. 6. *The ſolemnity of that grand proceſs deſcribed, according to ſcriptural repreſentations of it.* §. 7—8. *With a particular illuſtration of the ſentence,* Depart, Accurſed, &c. §. 9. *The execution will certainly and immediately follow.* §. 10. *The ſinner warned to prepare for enduring it.* §. 11. *The reflection of a ſinner ſtruck with the terror of the ſentence.*

§. 1. HEAR, O ſinner, and I will *ſpeak* (a) yet once more, as in the name of God, of God, thine Almighty judge; who, if thou doſt not attend to his ſervants, will e'er long ſpeak unto thee in a more immediate manner, with an energy and terror which thou ſhalt not be able to reſiſt.

§. 2. Thou haſt been convicted, as in his preſence. Thy pleas have been over-ruled; or rather, they have been ſilenced. It appears, before God, it appears to thine own conſcience, that thou haſt nothing more to offer in arreſt of judgment; therefore hear thy ſentence, and ſummon up, if thou canſt, all the powers of thy ſoul to bear the execution of it. It is indeed a very ſmall thing to be judged of man's judgment; but he that now judgeth thee, *is the Lord* (b) Hear therefore, and tremble, while I tell thee, how he will ſpeak to thee; or rather, while I ſhew thee, from expreſs ſcripture, how he doth now ſpeak, and what is the authentic and recorded ſentence of his word; even of his word, who hath ſaid, *heaven and earth ſhall paſs away; but not one tittle of my word ſhall ever paſs away* (c).

§. 3. The law of God ſpeaks, not to thee alone, O ſinner, not to thee by any particular addreſs; but in a moſt

(a) Job xlii. 4. (b) 1 Cor. iv. 3—4. (c) Matt. v. 18.

moſt univerſal language, it ſpeaks to all tranſgreſſors, and levels its terrors againſt all offences; great or ſmall, without any exception. And this is its language: *Curſed is every one, that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them* (d). This is its voice to the whole world; and this it ſpeaks to thee. Its awful contents are thy perſonal concern, O reader; and thy conſcience knows it. Far from continuing in all things that are written therein to do them, thou canſt not but be ſenſible, that *innumerable evils have encompaſſed thee about* (e). It is then manifeſt, thou art the man, whom it condemns; thou art even now *curſed with a curſe*, as God emphatically ſpeaks (f); with the curſe of the moſt High God: Yea, all the curſes which are written in the book of the law, are pointed againſt *thee* (g). God may righteouſly execute any of them upon thee in a moment; and tho' thou at preſent feeleſt none of them, yet, if infinite mercy doth not prevent, it is but a little while, and they will come into thy bowels like water, till thou art burſt aſunder with them, and ſhall penetrate like *oil into thy bones* (h).

§. 4. Thus ſaith the Lord, *The ſoul that ſinneth, it ſhall die* (i). But thou haſt ſinned, and therefore thou art under a ſentence of death. And O unhappy creature, of what a death! What will the end of theſe things be? That the agonies of diſſolving nature ſhall ſeize thee; that thy ſoul ſhall be torn away from thy langiſhing body, and thou return to the *duſt from whence thou waſt taken* (k): This is indeed one awful effect of ſin. In theſe affecting characters has God, through all nations and all ages of men, written the awful regiſter and memorial of his holy abhorrence of it, and righteous diſpleaſure againſt it. But alas, all this ſolemn pomp and horror of dying is but the opening of the dreadful ſcene. It is but a rough kind of ſtroke, by which the fetters are knocked off, when the criminal is led out to torture and execution.

§. 5.

(d) Gal. iii. 10. (e) Pſal. xl. 12. (f) Mal. iii. 9.
(g) Deut. xxix. 20. [h] Pſal. cix. 18. [i] Ezek. xviii. 4.
[k] Pſal. civ. 29.

§. 5. Thus ſaith the Lord, the wicked ſhall be turned into hell, *even all the nations that forget GOD* (l). Tho' there be whole nations of them, their multitudes and their power ſhall be no defence to them. They ſhall be driven into hell together; into that flaming priſon, which divine vengeance hath prepared; into *Tophet*, which is ordained of old, even for royal ſinners as well as for others, ſo little can any human diſtinction protect! He hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the *breath* of the Lord, like a *ſtream of brimſtone ſhall kindle it* [m]; and the flaming torrent ſhall flow in upon it ſo faſt, that it ſhall be turned into a ſea of liquid fire; or, as the ſcripture alſo expreſſes it, a lake burning with fire and brimſtone *for ever and ever* [n]. This is the ſecond death; and the death, to which thou, O ſinner, by the word of God art doomed.

§. 6. And ſhall this ſentence ſtand upon record in vain? Shall the law ſpeak it, and the goſpel ſpeak it? And ſhall it never be pronounced more audibly? And will God never require and execute the puniſhment? He will, O ſinner, require it; and he will execute it; tho' he may ſeem for a while to delay. For well doſt thou know, that he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the whole world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained, of which he hath given us aſſurance in having raiſed him from the dead [o]. And when God judgeth the world, O reader, whoever thou art, He will judge thee. And while I remind thee of it, I would alſo remember, that he will judge me.—And knowing the terror of the Lord, [p], that I may deliver my own ſoul [q], I would with all plainneſs and ſincerity labour to deliver thine.

§. 7. I therefore repeat the ſolemn warning: Thou, O ſinner, ſhalt *ſtand before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt* [r]. Thou ſhalt ſee that pompous appearance; the deſcription of which is grown ſo familiar to thee, that the repetition

[l] Pſal ix 17. [m] Iſai. xxx. 33. [n] Rev. xxi. 8.
[o] Acts xvii. 31. [p] 2 Cor. v. 11. [q] Ezek. xxxiii. 9.
[r] 2 Cor. v. 10.

petition of it makes no impreſſion on thy mind. But ſurely, ſtupid as thou now art, the ſhrill trumpet of the Arch-Angel ſhall ſhake thy very ſoul: And if nothing elſe can awaken and alarm thee, the convulſions and flames of a diſſolving world ſhall do it.

§. 8. Doſt thou really think, that the intent of Chriſt's final appearance is only to recover his people from the grave, and to raiſe them to glory and happineſs? Whatever aſſurance thou haſt, that there ſhall be a reſurrection of the juſt; thou haſt the ſame, that there ſhall alſo be a *reſurrection of the unjuſt* [s]: That he ſhall ſeparate the riſing dead one from another, as a ſhepherd divideth his *ſheep from the goats* [t], with equal certainty, and with infinitely greater eaſe. Or can you imagine, that he will only make an example of ſome flagrant and notorious ſinners, when it is ſaid, that all the dead, both ſmall and great, ſhall *ſtand before GOD* [u]; and that he who knew not his maſter's will, and conſequently ſeems of all others to have had the faireſt excuſe for his omiſſion to obey it; yet even he, for that very omiſſion, ſhall be beaten, though with fewer *ſtripes* [w]? Or can you think, that a ſentence to be delivered with ſo much pomp and majeſty, a ſentence by which the righteous judgment of God is to be revealed, and to have its moſt conſpicuous and final triumph, will be inconſiderable; or the puniſhment to which it ſhall conſign the ſinner, be ſlight or tolerable? There would have been little reaſon to apprehend that, even if we had been left barely to our own conjectures, what that ſentence ſhould be. But this is far from being the caſe: Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, in his infinite condeſcenſion and compaſſion, has been pleaſed to give us a copy of the ſentence, and no doubt, a moſt exact copy; and the words which contain it are worthy of being inſcribed on every heart. The King, amidſt all the ſplendor and dignity in which he ſhall then appear, ſhall ſay unto thoſe on his right hand, *Come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared*

[s] Acts xxiv. 15. [t] Matt. xxiv. 32. [u] Rev. xx. 12.
[w] Luke xii 48.

pared for you from the foundation of the world (x)! And where the word of a *King* is, there is *power* indeed (y). And theſe words have a power, which may juſtly animate the heart of a humble chriſtian, under the moſt overwhelming ſorrow, and may fill him with *joy unſpeakable, and full of glory* (z). To be pronounced the bleſſed of the Lord! to be called to a kingdom! to the immediate, the everlaſting inheritance of it! and of ſuch a kingdom! ſo well prepared, ſo glorious, ſo compleat, ſo exquiſitely fitted for the delight and entertainment of ſuch creatures ſo formed and ſo renewed, that it ſhall appear worthy the eternal counſels of God to have contrived it, worthy his eternal love to have prepared it, and to have delighted itſelf with the views of beſtowing it upon his people: Behold, a bleſſed hope indeed! A lively glorious hope, to which we are begotten again by the reſurrection of Chriſt from *the dead* (a), and formed by the ſanctifying influence of the ſpirit of God upon our minds. But it is a hope, from which thou, O ſinner, art at preſent excluded: And methinks, that might be grievous; to reflect, "Theſe gracious words ſhall Chriſt ſpeak "to ſome; to multitudes, but not to me: On me there "is no bleſſedneſs pronounced: For me there is no "kingdom prepared." But is that all? Alas, ſinner, our Lord hath given thee a dreadful counterpart to this. He has told us, what he will ſay to thee, if thou continueſt what thou art; to thee, and all the nations of the impenitent and unbelieving world, be they ever ſo numerous, be the rank of particular criminals ever ſo great. He ſhall ſay to the Kings of the earth, who have been rebels againſt him, to the great and rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, as well as to every bond man, and every free man of inferior *rank* (b); DEPART FROM ME ACCURSED, INTO EVERLASTING FIRE, PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS [c]. Oh, pauſe upon theſe weighty words, that thou mayeſt enter into ſomething of the importance of them!

§. 9.

(x) Matt. xxv. 34. (y) Eccleſ viii. 4. (z) 1 Pet. i. 8.
(a) 1 Pet. i. 3. (b) Rev. vi. 15. [c] Matt. xxv. 41.

§. 9. He will ſay, DEPART: You ſhall be driven from his preſence with diſgrace and infamy: FROM HIM, the ſource of life and bleſſedneſs, in a nearneſs to whom all the inhabitants of heaven continually rejoice: You ſhall depart ACCURSED: You have broken God's law, and its curſe falls upon you: and you are, and ſhall be under that curſe, that abiding curſe: From that day forward you ſhall be regarded by God, and all his creatnres, as an accurſed and abominable thing; as the moſt deteſtable, and the moſt miſerable part of the creation. You ſhall go into FIRE: And Oh, conſider, into what fire! Is it merely into one fierce blaze, which ſhall conſume you in a moment, tho' with exquiſite pain? That were terrible. But Oh, ſuch terrors are not to be named with theſe. Thine, ſinner, is EVERLASTING FIRE: It is that, which our Lord hath in ſuch awful terms deſcribed as prevailing there, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched; and then ſays it a ſecond time, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched; and again, in wonderful compaſſion, a third time, *where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched* (d). Nor was it originally prepared, or principally intended for you: It was prepared for the DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS; for thoſe firſt grand rebels, who were immediately upon their fall doomed to it: And ſince you have taken part with them in their apoſtacy, you muſt ſink with them into that flaming ruin; and ſink ſo much the deeper, as you have deſpiſed a Saviour, who was never offered to them. Theſe muſt be your companions, and your tormentors, with whom you muſt dwell for ever. And is it I, that ſay this? or ſays not the law, and the goſpel, the ſame? Does not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt expreſsly ſay it, who is *the faithful and true witneſs* (e), even he, who is himſelf to pronounce the ſentence?

§. 10. And when it is thus pronounced, and pronounced by him, ſhall it not alſo be executed? Who could imagine the contrary? Who could imagine there ſhould

(d) Mark ix. 44. 46. 48. (e) Rev. iii. 14.

ſhould be all this pompous declaration, to fill the mind only with vain terror; and that this ſentence ſhould vaniſh into ſmoke? You may eaſily apprehend, that this would be a greater reproach to the divine adminiſtration, than if ſentence were never to be paſſed. And therefore, we might eaſily have inferred the execution of it, from the proceſs of the preceeding judgment. But leſt the treacherous heart of a ſinner ſhould deceive him with ſo vain a hope, the aſſurance of that execution is immediately added in very memorable terms. It ſhall be done: It ſhall immediately be done. Then, on that very day, while the ſound of it is yet in their ears, the wicked ſhall go away into *everlaſting puniſhment* (f): And thou, O reader, whoever thou art, being found in their number, ſhalt go away with them; ſhalt be driven on among all theſe wretched multitudes, and plunged with them into eternal ruin. The wide gates of hell ſhall be open to receive thee; they ſhall be ſhut upon thee for ever to incloſe thee; and be faſt barred, by the Almighty hand of divine juſtice, to prevent all hope, all poſſibility of eſcape for ever.

§. 11. And now, prepare thyſelf *to meet the LORD thy GOD* (g): Summon up all the reſolution of thy mind, to endure ſuch a ſentence, ſuch an execution as this: For he will not *meet thee as a man* (h); whoſe heart may ſometimes fail him, when about to exert a needful act of ſeverity, ſo that compaſſion may prevail againſt reaſon and juſtice. No, he will *meet thee as a GOD*, whoſe ſchemes and purpoſes are all immoveable as his throne. I therefore teſtify to thee in his name this day, that if God be true, he will thus ſpeak; and that if he be able, he will thus act. And, on ſuppoſition of thy continuance in thine impenitence and unbelief, thou art brought into this miſerable caſe; that if God be not either falſe or weak, thou art undone, thou art eternally undone.

(f) Matt. xxv. 46. (g) Amos iv. 12. (h) Iſai. xlvii. 3.

The REFLECTION *of a ſinner, ſtruck with the Terror of this Sentence.*

" WRETCH that I am! What ſhall I do? or " whither ſhall I flee? *I am weighed in the ba-* " *lance, and am found wanting* [i]. This is indeed my " doom; the doom I am to expect from the mouth of " Chriſt himſelf; from the mouth of him, that died for " the redemption and ſalvation of men. Dreadful ſen- " tence! and ſo much the more dreadful, when con- " ſidered in that view! To what ſhall I look to ſave " me from it? To whom ſhall I call? Shall I ſay to " the rocks, *Fall upon me*, and to the hills, *Cover me* [k]? " What ſhould I gain by that? Were I indeed over- " whelmed with rocks and mountains, they could not " conceal me from the notice of his eye; and his hand " could reach me with as much eaſe there as any " where elſe.

" Wretch indeed that I am! Oh that I had never " been born! Oh that I had never known the dignity " and prerogative of the rational nature! Fatal prero- " gative indeed, that renders me obnoxious to condem- " nation and wrath! Oh that I had never been inſtruc- " ted in the will of God at all, rather than that being " thus inſtructed, I ſhould have diſregarded and tranſ- " greſſed it! Would to God, I had been allied to the " meaneſt of the human race, to them that come near- " eſt to the ſtate of the brutes, rather than that I ſhould " have had my lot in cultivated life, amidſt ſo many " of the improvements of reaſon, and (dreadful reflec- " tion!) amidſt ſo many of the advantages of religion " too! and thus to have perverted all to my own de- " ſtruction! Oh that God would take away this ra- " tional ſoul! But alas, it will live for ever; will live " to feel the agonies of eternal death.—Why have I ſeen " the beauties and glories of a world like this, to ex- " change for that ſad g priſon! Why have I taſted " ſo many of [illegible]'s bounties, to wring out at " laſt

[k] Luke xxiii. 30.

[l] Iſai.

" laſt the dregs of his wrath! Why have I known the " delights of ſocial life and friendly converſe, to ex- " change them for the horrid company of devils and " damned ſpirits in Tophet! Oh who can dwell with " them in devouring flames! Who can lie down with " them in *everlaſting, everlaſting, everlaſting burnings* [l]!

" But whom have I to blame in all this, but myſelf? " What have I to accuſe, but my own ſtupid incorrigible " folly? On what is all this terrible ruin to be charged, " but on this one fatal curſed cauſe, that having broken " God's law, I rejected his goſpel too?

" Yet ſtay, O my ſoul, in the midſt of all theſe dole- " ful foreboding complaints. Can I ſay, that I have " finally rejected the goſpel? Am I not to this day un- " der the ſound of it? The ſentence is not yet gone " forth againſt me, in ſo determinate a manner as to be " utterly irreverſible. Thro' all this gloomy proſpect " one ray of hope breaks in, and it is poſſible I may " yet be delivered.

" Reviving thought! Rejoice in it, O my ſoul, tho' " it be with trembling; and turn immediately to that " God, who, tho' provoked by ten thouſand offences, " has not yet ſworn in his wrath, that thou ſhalt never " be permitted to hold farther intercourſe with him, " or to *enter into his reſt* [m].

" I do then, O bleſſed LORD, proſtrate myſelf in the " duſt before thee. I own, I am a condemned and " miſerable creature. But my language is that of the " humble publican, *God be merciful to me a ſinner* (n)! " Some general and confuſed apprehenſions I have of " a way, by which I may poſſibly eſcape. O God, what- " ever that way is, ſhew it me, I beſeech thee! Point " it out ſo plainly, that I may not be able to miſtake " it! And Oh, reconcile my heart to it, be it ever ſo " humbling, be it ever ſo painful!

" Surely, LORD, I have much to learn; but be thou " my teacher! Stay for a little thine up-lifted hand; and " in thine infinite compaſſion, delay the ſtroke, till I en- " quire a little farther, how I may finally avoid it!"

[l] Iſai. xxxiii. 14. [m] Pſalm xcv. 11. [n] Luke xviii. 13.

CHAP. VII.

The helpleſs State of the SINNER under Condemnation.

The ſinner urged to conſider, how he can be ſaved from this impending ruin. §. 1—2. (1.) *Not by any thing he can offer.* §. 3. (2.) *Nor by any thing he can endure.* §. 4. (3.) *Nor by any thing he can do in the courſe of future duty.* §. 5. (4.) *Nor by any alliance with fellow ſinners, on earth, or in hell.* §. 6—8. (5.) *Nor by any interpoſition or interceſſion of angels or ſaints in his favour.* §. 9. *Hint of the only method, to be afterwards more largely explained.* Ibid. *The lamentation of a ſinner in this miſerable condition.*

§. 1. SINNER, thou haſt heard the ſentence of God, as it ſtands upon record in his ſacred and immutable word. And wilt thou lie down under it in everlaſting deſpair? Wilt thou make no attempt to be delivered from it, when it ſpeaks nothing leſs than ETERNAL DEATH to thy ſoul? If a criminal, condemned by human laws, has but the leaſt ſhadow of hope, that he may poſſibly eſcape, he is all attention to it. If there be a friend, who he thinks can help him, with what ſtrong importunity does he intreat the interpoſition of that friend? And even while he is before the judge, how difficult is it often to force him away from the bar, while the cry of mercy, mercy, mercy, may be heard, tho' it be never ſo unſeaſonable? A mere poſſibility that it may make ſome impreſſion, makes him eager in it, and unwilling to be ſilenced and removed.

§. 2. Wilt thou not then, O ſinner, e'er yet execution is done, that execution which may perhaps be done this very day, wilt thou not caſt about in thy thoughts, what meaſures may be taken for deliverance? Yet what meaſures can be taken? Conſider attentively, for it is an affair of moment. Thy wiſdom, thy power, thy eloquence, or thine intereſt, can never be exerted on a greater

greater occaſion. If thou canſt help thyſelf, do. If thou haſt any ſecret ſource of relief, go not out of thyſelf for other aſſiſtance. If thou haſt any ſacrifice to offer, if thou haſt any ſtrength to exert; yea, if thou haſt any allies on earth, or in the inviſible word, who can defend and deliver thee; take thine own way, ſo that thou mayeſt but be delivered at all, and we may not ſee thy ruin. But ſay, Oh ſinner, in the preſence of God, what ſacrifice thou wilt preſent, what ſtrength thou wilt exert, what allies thou wilt have recourſe to, on ſo urgent, ſo hopeleſs an occaſion: For hopeleſs I muſt indeed pronounce it, if ſuch methods are taken.

§. 3. The juſtice of God is injured: Haſt thou any atonement to make to it? If thou waſt brought to an enquiry and propoſal, like that of the awakened ſinner, Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleaſed with *thouſands of rams*, or with *ten thouſands of rivers of oil* [a]? Alas, wert thou as great a prince as Solomon himſelf, and couldſt thou indeed purchaſe ſuch ſacrifices as theſe, there would be no room to mention them. Lebanon would not be ſufficient to burn, nor all the beaſts thereof for a burnt-offering [b].—Even under that diſpenſation, which admitted and required ſacrifices in ſome caſes, the blood of bulls and of goats, tho' it exempted the offender from farther temporal puniſhment, could not *take away ſin* [c], nor prevail by any means to purge the conſcience in the ſight of God. And that ſoul that had done ought preſumptuouſly was not allowed to bring any ſin-offering or treſpaſs offering at all, but was condemned to *die without mercy* (d). Now God and thine own conſcience know, that thine offences have not been merely the errors of ignorance and inadvertency, but that thou haſt ſinned with an high hand in repeated aggravated inſtances, as thou haſt acknowledged already.—Shouldſt thou add, with the wretched ſinner deſcribed above, *ſhall I give my*

[a] Micah vi. 6, 7. [b] Iſai. xl. 16. [c] Heb. x. 4. d] Numb. xv. 30.

my firſt born for my tranſgreſſion, the fruit of my body for the ſin of my ſoul (e)? What could the blood of a beloved child do in ſuch a caſe, but dye thy crimes ſo much the deeper, and add a yet unknown horror to them? Thou haſt offended a being of infinite majeſty; and if that offence is to be expiated by blood, it muſt be by another kind of blood, than that which flows in the veins of thy children, or in thine own.

§. 4 Wilt thou then ſuffer thyſelf, till thou haſt made full ſatisfaction? But where ſhall that ſatisfaction be made?—Shall it be by any calamities to be endured in this mortal momentary life? Is the juſtice of God then eſteemed ſo little a thing, that the ſorrows of a few days ſhould ſuffice to anſwer its demands?—Or doſt thou think of future ſufferings, in the inviſible world? If thou doſt, that is not deliverance: And with regard to that I may venture to ſay, When thou haſt made full ſatisfaction, thou wilt be releaſed: When thou haſt paid the utmoſt farthing of that debt, thy priſon doors ſhall be opened. In the mean time, thou muſt make thy bed *in hell* (f): And, O unhappy man, wilt thou lie down there, with a ſecret hope, that the moment will come, when the rigour of divine juſtice will not be able to inflict any thing more than thou haſt endured, and when thou mayeſt claim thy diſcharge as a matter of right? It would indeed be well for thee, if thou couldſt carry down with thee ſuch a hope, falſe and flattering as it is: But alas, thou wilt ſee things in ſo juſt a light, that to have no comfort but this, will be eternal deſpair. That one word of thy ſentence, EVERLASTING; that one declaration, the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched; will be ſufficient to ſtrike ſuch a thought into black confuſion, and to overwhelm thee with hopeleſs agony and horror.

§. 5. Or do you think, that your future reformation and diligence in duty for the time to come, will procure your diſcharge from this ſentence? Take heed, ſinner, what kind of obedience thou thinkeſt of offering

(e) Micah vi. 7. (f) Pſalm cxxxix 8.

ing to an holy God. That muſt be ſpotleſs and compleat which his infinite ſanctity can approve and accept, if he conſider thee in thyſelf alone: There muſt be no inconſtancy, no forgetfulneſs, no mixture of ſin, attending it. And wilt thou, enfeebled as thou art, by ſo much original corruption, and ſo many ſinful habits contracted by innumerable actual tranſgreſſions, undertake to render ſuch an obedience, and that for all the remainder of thy life? In vain wouldſt thou attempt it, even for one day. New guilt would immediately plunge thee into new ruin. But if it did not; if from this moment to the very end of thy life all were as compleat obedience as the law of God required from Adam in paradiſe, would that be ſufficient to cancel paſt guilt? Would it diſcharge an old debt, that thou hadſt not contracted a new one? Offer this to thy neighbour and ſee if he will accept it for payment; and if he will not, wilt thou preſume to offer it to thy God!

§. 6. But I will not multiply words on ſo plain a ſubject. While I ſpeak thus, time is paſſing away, death preſſes on, and judgment is approaching. And what can ſave thee from theſe awful ſcenes, or what can protect thee in them? Can the world ſave thee! that vain deluſive idol of thy wiſhes and purſuits, to which thou art ſacrificing thine eternal hopes? Well doſt thou know, that it will utterly forſake thee when thou needeſt it moſt; and that not one of its enjoyments can be carried along with thee into the inviſible ſtate: No, not ſo much as a trifle to remember it by; if thou couldſt deſire to remember ſo inconſtant, and ſo treacherous a friend, as the world has been.

§. 7. And when you are dead, or when you are dying, can your ſinful companions ſave you? Is there any one of them, if he were ever ſo deſirous of doing it, that can give unto God *a ranſom for you* (g), to deliver you from going down to the grave, or from going down to hell? Alas, you will probably be ſo ſenſible of this, that when you lie on the border of the grave,

(g) Pſalm xlix. 7.

grave, you will be unwilling to ſee, or to converſe with thoſe, that were once your favourite companions. They will afflict you rather than relieve you, even then: How much leſs can they relieve you before the bar of God, when they are overwhelmed with their own condemnation.

§. 8. As for the powers of darkneſs, you are ſure, they will be far from any ability, or inclination to help you. Satan has been watching and labouring for your deſtruction, and he will triumph in it. But if there could be any thing of an amicable confederacy between you, what would that be, but an aſſociation in ruin? For the day of judgment of unjuſt men, will alſo be the judgment of theſe rebellious ſpirits; and the fire into which thou, O ſinner, muſt depart, is that which was prepared for the *Devil and his angels* (h).

§. 9. Will the celeſtial ſpirits then ſave thee? Will they interpoſe their power, or their prayers, in thy favour? An interpoſition of power, when ſentence is gone forth againſt thee, were an act of rebellion againſt heaven, which theſe holy and excellent creatures would abhor. And when the final pleaſure of the judge is known, inſtead of interceeding in vain for the wretched criminal, they would rather, with ardent zeal for the glory of their Lord, and cordial acquieſcence in the determination of his wiſdom and juſtice, prepare to execute it. Yea, difficult as it may be at preſent to conceive it, it is a certain truth, that the ſervants of Chriſt, who now moſt tenderly love you, and moſt affectionately ſeek your ſalvation; not excepting thoſe, who are allied to you in the neareſt bonds of nature, or of friendſhip; even they ſhall put their *amen* to it. Now indeed their bowels yearn over you, and their eye poureth out tears on your account: Now they expoſtulate with you, and plead with God for you, if by any means, while yet there is hope, you may be plucked as a firebrand out of *the burning* (i). But alas, their remonſtrances you will not regard: And as for their prayers, what

(h) Mat. xxv. 41. (i) Amos iv. 11.

what ſhould they aſk for you? What but this, that you may ſee yourſelves to be undone? and that, utterly deſpairing of any help from yourſelves, or from any Created power, you may lie before God in humility and brokenneſs of heart; that, ſubmitting yourſelves to his righteous judgement, and in an utter Renunciation of all ſelf-dependance, and of all Creature-dependance, you may lift up an humble look towards him, as almoſt from the depths of hell, if peradventure he may have compaſſion upon you, and may himſelf direct you to that only method of reſcue, which, while things continue as in preſent circumſtances they are, neither earth, nor hell, nor heaven can afford you.

The LAMENTATION *of a Sinner, in this miſerable Condition.*

" OH doleful, uncomfortable, helpleſs ſtate! Oh " wretch that I am, to have reduced myſelf to it! " Poor, empty, miſerable, abandon'd creature! Where " is my pride, and the haughtineſs of my heart? where " are my idol deities, whom I have loved, and ſerved, " after whom I have walked, and whom I have ſought " (k), whilſt I have been multiplying my tranſgreſſions " againſt the majeſty of heaven? Is there no heart to " have compaſſion upon me? Is there no hand to ſave " me; Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O my " friends; for the hand of God hath touched me (l), " hath ſeized me! I feel it preſſing me hard, and what " ſhall I do? perhaps, they have pity upon me: but " alas, how feeble a compaſſion? Only if there be any " where in the whole compaſs of nature any help, tell " me where it may be found! O point it out; direct " me towards it; or rather, confounded and aſtoniſhed " as my mind is, take me by the hand, and lead me to " it,

" O ye miniſters of the Lord, whoſe office it is to " guide and comfort diſtreſſed ſouls, take pity upon me!

" I

(i) Amos iv. 11. (k) Jer. viii. 2. (l) Job xix. 21.

" I fear, I am a pattern, of many other helpleſs crea-
" tures, who have the like need of your aſſiſtance. Lay
" aſide your other cares, to care for my ſoul; to care
" for this precious ſoul of mine, which lies as it were
" bleeding to death, (if that expreſſion may be uſed,)
" while you perhaps hardly afford me a look; or, glan-
" cing an eye upon me, paſs over to the other ſide (m).
" Yet, alas, in a caſe like mine, what can your interpo-
" ſition avail, if it be alone; If the Lord do not help
" me, how can ye help me (n)?

" O God of the ſpirits of all fleſh (o), I lift up mine
" eyes unto thee and cry unto thee, as out of the belly of
" hell (p). I cry unto thee at leaſt from the borders of
" it. Yet while I lie before thee in this infinite diſtreſs
" I know, that thine Almighty power and boundleſs
" grace can ſtill find out a way for my recovery.

" Thou art he, whom I have moſt of all injured and
" affronted; and yet from thee alone muſt I now ſeek
" redreſs. Againſt thee, thee only have I ſinned, and
" done evil in thy ſight (q); ſo that thou mayeſt be
" juſtified when thou ſpeakeſt, and be clear when thou
" judgeſt, tho' thou ſhouldſt this moment adjudge me
" to eternal miſery. And yet I find ſomething that ſe-
" cretly draws me to thee, as if I might find reſcue
" there, where I have deſerved the moſt aggravated de-
" ſtruction. Bleſſed God, I have deſtroyed myſelf; but
" in thee is my help (a), if there can be help at all.

" I know in general, that thy ways are not as our ways
" nor thy thoughts as our thoughts; but are as high a-
" bove them, as the heavens are above the earth (s).
" Have mercy therefore upon me, O God, according to
" the multitude of thy tender mercies (t)! Oh point out
" the path to the city of refuge! Oh lead me thyſelf in
" the way everlaſting (u)! I know in general, that thy
" goſpel is the only remedy: O teach thy ſervants to ad-
" miniſter it! Oh prepare mine heart to receive it! and

" ſuffer

(m) Luke x. 31. (n) 2 kings vi. 27. (o) Num. xvi. 2. (p) Jonah ii. 2. (q) Pſalm li. 4. [r] Hoſea xiii. 9. [s] Iſa. lv. 8. 9. [t] Pſal. li. 1. [u] Pſal. cxxxix. 24.

" ſuffer not, as in many inſtances, that malignity which
" has ſpread itſelf thro' all my nature, to turn that no-
" ble Medicine into poiſon!"

CHAP. VIII.

News of Salvation by CHRIST brought to the convinced and condemned Sinner.

The awful things which have hitherto been ſaid, intended, not to grieve, but to help. §. 1. *After ſome reflection on the pleaſure with which a miniſter of the Goſpel may deliver the meſſage with which he is charged,* §. 2. *and ſome reaſons for the repetition of what is in ſpeculation ſo generally known,* § 3. *The author proceeds briefly to declare the ſubſtance of theſe glad tidings; viz. That God having in his infinite compaſſion ſent his Son to die for ſinners, is now reconcileable through him:* §. 4.----6. *So that the moſt heinous tranſgreſſions ſhall be entirely pardoned to believers, and they made compleatly and eternally happy.* §. 7, 8. *The ſinner's reflection on this good news.*

§. 1. MY dear reader! It is the great deſign of the goſpel, and where-ever it is cordially received, it is the glorious effects of it, to fill the heart with ſentiments of love; to teach us to abhor all unneceſſary rigour and ſeverity, and to delight, not in the grief, but in the happineſs of our fellow-creatures. I can hardly apprehend, how he can be a chriſtian, who takes pleaſure in the diſtreſs which appears even in a brute, much leſs in that of a human mind; and eſpecially in ſuch diſtreſs as the thoughts I have been propoſing muſt give, if there be any due attention to their weight and energy. I have often felt a tender regret, while I have been repreſenting theſe things; and I could have wiſhed from mine heart, that it had not been neceſſary

ceſſary to have placed them in ſo ſevere and ſo painful a light. But now I am addreſſing myſelf to a part of my work, which I undertake with unutterable pleaſure; and to that, which indeed I had in view, in all thoſe awful things which I have already been laying before you. I have been ſhewing you, that, if you hitherto have lived in a ſtate of impenitence and ſin, you are condemned by God's righteous judgment, and have in yourſelf no ſpring of hope, and no poſſibility of deliverance. But I mean not to leave you under this ſad apprehenſion, to lie down and die in diſpair, complaining of that cruel zeal, which has *tormented you before the time* [a].

§. 2. Ariſe, O thou dejected ſoul, that art proſtrate in the duſt before God, and trembling under the terror of his righteous ſentence; for I am commiſſioned to tell thee, that tho' thou haſt deſtroyed thyſelf, *in God is thine help* [b]. I bring thee good tidings of *great joy* [c], which delight mine own heart, while I proclaim them, and will I hope reach, and revive thine; even the tidings of ſalvation, by the blood and righteouſneſs of the REDEEMER. And I give it thee for thy greater ſecurity, in the words of a gracious and forgiving God, that he is in Chriſt reconciling the world unto himſelf, and not imputing to them their *treſpaſſes* [d].

§. 3. This is the beſt news that ever was heard, the moſt important meſſage which God ever ſent to his creatures: And tho' I doubt not at all, but living, as you have done, in a chriſtian country, you have heard it often, perhaps a thouſand and a thouſand times; I will with all ſimplicity and plainneſs, repeat it to you again, and repeat it as if you had never heard it before. If thou, O ſinner, ſhouldſt now for the firſt time feel it, then will it be as a new goſpel unto thee, though ſo familiar to thine ear; nor ſhall it be grievous for me to ſpeak what is ſo common, ſince to you it is *ſafe* and *neceſſary* [e]. They who are moſt deeply and intimately acquaint-

[a] Matth. viii. 29. [b] Hoſea xiii. 9. [c] Luke ii. 10. [d] 2. Cor. v. 19.

acquainted with it inſtead of being cloyed and fatiated, will hear it with diſtinguiſhed pleaſure; and as for thoſe who have hitherto ſlighted it, I am ſure they had need to hear it again. Nor is it abſolutely impoſſible, that ſome one ſoul at leaſt may read theſe lines, who hath never been clearly and fully inſtructed in this important doctrine, tho' his everlaſting *all* depends on knowing and receiving it. I will therefore take care that ſuch a one ſhall not have it to plead at the bar of God, that tho' he lived in a chriſtian country, he was never plainly and faithfully taught the doctrine of ſalvation by Jeſus Chriſt, the way, the truth, and the life, by whom alone we come unto the father (f).

§. 4. I do therefore teſtify unto you this day, that the holy and gracious Majeſty of heaven and earth, foreſeeing the fatal Apoſtacy into which the whole human race would fall, did not determine to deal in a way of ſtrict and rigorous ſeverity with us, ſo as to conſign us over to univerſal ruin and inevitable damnation; but on the contrary, he determined to enter into a treaty of peace and reconciliation, and to publiſh to all, whom the goſpel ſhould reach, the expreſs offers of life and glory, in a certain method, which his infinite wiſdom judged ſuitable to the purity of his nature, and the honour of government. This method was indeed a moſt aſtoniſhing one, which, familiar as it is to our thoughts and our tongues, I cannot recollect and mention without great amazement. He determined to ſend his own ſon into the world, the brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon (g), partaker of his own divine perfections and honours, to be not merely a teacher of righteouſneſs, and a meſſenger of grace, but alſo a ſacrifice for the ſins of men! and would conſent to his ſaving them, on no other condition but this, that he ſhould not only labour, but die in the cauſe.

§. 5. Accordingly, at ſuch a period of time as infinite wiſom ſaw moſt convenient, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt appeared in human fleſh; and after he had gone through

[f] John xiv. 6. [g] Heb. i. 3.

inceſſant and long continued fatigues, and born all the preceeding injuries, which the ingratitude and malice of men could inflict, he voluntarily ſubmitted himſelf to death, even the death of the croſs (h); and having been delivered for our offences, was raiſed again for our juſtification (i). After his reſurrection, he continued long enough, on earth to give his followers moſt convincing evidences of it, and then aſcended into heaven in their ſight (k); and ſent down his ſpirit from thence upon his Apoſtles, to enable them in the moſt perſuaſive and authoritative manner, to preach the goſpel (l): and he has given it in a charge to them, and to thoſe who in every age ſucceed them in this part of their office, that it ſhould be publiſhed to every creature (m); that all who believe in it may be ſaved, by virtue of its divine author, who is the ſame *yeſterday, to-day, and for ever* (n).

§ 6. This goſpel do I therefore now preach, and proclaim unto thee, O reader, with the ſincereſt deſire, that thro' divine grace, it may this very day be ſalvation to the ſoul (o). Know therefore, and conſider it whoſoever thou art, that as ſurely as theſe words are now before thine eyes, ſo ſure it is, that the incarnate Son of God was made a *ſpectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men* [p]; his back torn with ſcourges, his head with thorns, limbs ſtretched out as on a rack, and nailed to the accurſed tree; and in this miſerable condition he was hung by his hands and his feet, as an object of public infamy and contempt. Thus did he die, in the midſt of all the taunts and inſults of his cruel enemies, who thirſted for his blood; and, which was the ſaddeſt circumſtance of all, in the midſt of theſe agonies with which he cloſed the moſt innocent, perfect, and uſeful life that ever was ſpent upon earth, he had not thoſe ſupports of the divine preſence, which ſinful men have often experienced, when they have been ſuffering for the teſtimony of their conſcience. They have often burſt out into tranſports of joy and

[h] Phil. ii. 2. (i) Rom. iv. 25. [k] Acts i. 9. 11. [l] Luke xxiv 40. [m] Mark xvi. 15. [n] Heb. xiii. 8. [o] Luke xix. 9. [p] 1 Cor. iv. 9.

and ſongs of praiſe, while their executioners have been glutting their helliſh malice, and more than ſavage barbarity, by making their torments artificially grievous; but the crucified Jeſus cried out, in the diſtreſs of his ſpotleſs and holy ſoul, *my God, my God*, why haſt thou forſaken me [q]?

§. 7. Look upon our dear redeemer! look up to this mournful, dreadful, yet in one view, delightful ſpectacle; and then aſk thine own heart, do I believe that Jeſus ſuffered and died thus? Let me anſwer in God's own words, he was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities, and the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, that by his ſtripes we might be healed: it pleaſed the Lord to bruiſe him, and to put him to grief, when he made his ſoul an offering for ſin; for the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all [r]. So that I may addreſs you in the words of the Apoſtle, be it known unto you therefore, that through this man is preached unto you the *forgiveneſs of ſins* [s]; as it was his command, juſt after he roſe from the dead, that repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name unto all nations, beginning at *Jeruſalem* [t]; the very Place, where his blood had ſo lately been ſhed in ſuch a cruel manner. I do therefore teſtify to you, in the words of another inſpired writer, that Chriſt was made ſin, that is, a ſin-offering, for us, tho' he knew no ſin, that we might be made the Righteouſneſs of God in him [u]; that is, that thro' the righteouſneſs he has fulfilled, and the atonement he has made, we might be accepted by God as righteous, and be not only pardoned, but received into his favour. To you is the word of this ſalvation ſent [x]; and to you, O reader, are the bleſſings of it even now offered by God, ſincerely offered; ſo that, after all that I have ſaid under the former heads, it is not your having broken the law of God, that ſhall prove your ruin, if you do not alſo reject his goſpel. It is not all thoſe legions of ſins, which riſe up in battle array againſt you, that ſhall be able to

[q] Matt. xxviii. 46. [r] Iſai. iii. 5. 6. 10. [s] Acts xiii. 38. (t) Luke xxiv. 47. [u] 2Cor. v. 21. [x] Acts xiii. 26.

deſtroy you, if unbelief do not lead them on, and final impenitency do not bring up the rear. I know, that guilt is a timorous thing; I will therefore ſpeak in the words of God himſelf, nor can any be more comfortable: he that believeth on the *Son*, hath everlaſting *Life* (y); and he ſhall never come into *Condemnation* (z): There is therefore no condemnation, no kind or degree of it, to them, to any one of them, who are in Jeſus Chriſt, who walk not after the fleſh, but after the ſpirit (a). You have indeed been a very great ſinner, and your offences have truely been attended with moſt heinous aggravations; nevertheleſs you may rejoice in the aſſurance, that where ſin hath abounded there ſhall grace much more abound (b); that where ſin hath reigned unto death, where it has had its moſt unlimited ſway, and moſt unreſiſted triumphs, there ſhall righteouſneſs reign to eternal life thro' *Jeſus Chriſt our Lord* (c). That righteouſneſs, to which on believing on him thou wilt be intitled, ſhall not only break thoſe chains, by which ſin is (as it were) dragging thee at its chariot wheels with a furious pace to eternal ruin; but it ſhall clothe thee with the robes of ſalvation, ſhall fix thee on a throne of glory, where thou ſhalt live and reign for ever among the princes of heaven; ſhalt reign in immortal beauty and joy, without one remaining ſcar of divine diſpleaſure upon thee; without one ſingle mark by which it could be known, that thou hadſt ever been obnoxious to wrath and a curſe; except it be an anthem of praiſe to the Lamb that was ſlain, and has waſhed thee from thy ſins in his own blood (d).

§. 8. Nor is it neceſſary, in order to thy being releaſed from guilt, and intitled to this high and complete felicity, that thou ſhouldſt, before thou wilt venture to apply to Jeſus, bring any good works of thine own to recommend thee to his acceptance. It is indeed true, that if thy faith be ſincere, it will certainly produce them: but I have the authority of the word of God to tell thee, that if thou this day ſincerely believeſt in the name of the Son of God,

[y] John iii. 36. [z] John v. 24. (a) Rom. viii. 1. (b) Rom. v. 20. (c) Rom. v. 21. (d) Rev. i. 5.

God, thou ſhalt this day be taken under his care, and be numbered among thoſe of his ſheep, to whom he hath graciouſly declared, that he will give eternal life, and that they ſhall never periſh (e). Thou haſt no need therefore to ſay, who ſhall go up into heaven, or who ſhall deſcend into the deep for me? For the word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thine heart (f). With this joyful meſſage I leave thee; with this faithful ſaying, indeed worthy of all acceptation (g) with this goſpel, O ſinner, which is my life; and which, if thou doſt not reject it, will be thine too.

The ſinner's REFLECTION *on this good News.*

" OH my ſoul, how aſtoniſhing is the meſſage, which " thou haſt this day received! I have indeed often heard it before; and it is grown ſo common to me, " that the ſurprize is not ſenſible. But reflect, O my " ſoul, what is it thou haſt heard; and ſay, whether the " name of our Saviour, whoſe meſſage it is, may not well " be called Wonderful Counſellor (h), when he diſplays " before thee ſuch wonders of love, and propoſes to thee " ſuch counſels of peace?

" Bleſſed Jeſus, is it indeed thus! is it not the fiction " of the human mind? Surely it is not! what human " mind could have invented or conceived it? Is it a " plain, a certain fact, that thou didſt leave the magnificence and joy of the heavenly world, in compaſſion to " ſuch a wretch as I! Oh hadſt thou, from that height " of dignity and felicity, only looked down upon me for " a moment, and ſent ſome gracious word to me for my " direction and comfort, even by the leaſt of thy ſervants, " juſtly might I have proſtrated myſelf in grateful admiration, and have kiſſed the very footſteps of him that " publiſhed the Salvation (i). But didſt thou condeſcend " to be thyſelf the meſſenger! what grace had that been, " tho' thou hadſt but once in perſon made the declarati-

(e) John x. 28. (f) Rom. x. 6, 7, 8. (g) Tim. i. 15. (h) Iſai. ix. 6. (i) Iſai. lii. 7.

" on, and immediately returned back to the throne, from " whence divine compaſſion brought thee down! but " this is not all the triumph of thine illuſtrious grace. " It not only brought thee down to earth, but kept thee " here, in a frail and wretched tabernacle, for long ſuc- " ceſſive years: and at length, it coſt thee thy life, and " ſtretched thee out as a malefactor upon the croſs, af- " ter thou hadſt borne inſult and cruelty, which it may " juſtly wound my heart ſo much as to think of. And " thus thou haſt atoned injured juſtice, and redeemed me " to God with thine own blood (k).

" What ſhall I ſay? Lord, I believe, help thou mine " Unbelief (l)! it ſeems to put faith to the ſtretch, to " admit, what it indeed exceeds the utmoſt ſtretch of " imagination to conceive. Bleſſed, for ever bleſſed be " thy name, O thou father of mercies, that thou haſt con- " trived the way! eternal thanks to the lamb that was " ſlain, and to that kind providence that ſent the word of " ſalvation to me? Oh let me not, for ten thouſand " worlds, receive the grace of God in vain [m]! Oh im- " preſs this goſpel upon my ſoul, till its ſaving virtue be " diffuſed over every faculty! let it not only be heard, " and acknowledged, and profeſſed, but felt! make it " thy power to my eternal Salvation [n]; and raiſe me " to that humble tender gratitude, to that active un- " wearied zeal in thy ſervice, which becomes one to " whom ſo much is forgiven (o), and forgiven upon ſuch " terms as theſe!

" I feel a ſudden glow in mine heart, while theſe tid- " ings are ſounding in mine ears: but Oh, let it not be a " ſlight ſuperficial tranſport! Oh let not this, which I " would fain call my chriſtian joy be as that fooliſh laugh- " ter, with which I have been ſo madly enchanted, like " the crackling Blaze of Thorns under a Pot (p)! O " teach me to ſecure this mighty Bleſſing, this glorious " hope, in the method which thou haſt appointed! and " preſerve me from miſtaking the joy of nature, while it

(k) Rev. v. 9. (l) Mark ix. 24. [m] 2 Cor. vi. 1. [n] Rom. i. 16. (o) Luke vii. 47. [p] Eccleſ. vii. 6.

" it catches a glimpſe of its reſcue from deſtruction, for " that conſent of grace, which embraces and enſures the " deliverance!"

CHAP. IX.

A more particular Account of the Way, by which this Salvation is to be obtained.

An enquiry into the way of ſalvation by Chriſt being ſuppoſed, §. 1. *The ſinner is in general directed to repentance and faith,* §. 2. *and urged to give up all ſelf-dependance,* §. 3. *and to ſeek ſalvation by free grace.* §. 4. *A ummary of more particular directions is propoſed:* §. 5. (1.) *That the ſinner ſhould apply to Chriſt,* §. 6. *with deep abhorrence of his former ſins,* §. 7. *and a firm reſolution of forſaking them.* §. 8. (2.) *That he ſolemnly commit his ſoul into the hands of Chriſt, the great vital act of faith,* §. 9. *which is exemplified at large.* §. 10. (3.) *That he make it in fact the governing care of his future life to obey and imitate Chriſt.* §. 11. *This the only method of obtaining goſpel-ſalvation.* §. 12. *This ſinner deliberating on the expediency of accepting it.*

§. 1. I Now conſider you, my dear reader, as coming to me with the enquiry, which the Jews once addreſſed to our Lord, what ſhall we do that we may *work the works of God* (a)! " What method ſhall I " take, to ſecure that redemption and ſalvation, which " I am told Chriſt has procured for his people?" I would anſwer it as ſeriouſly, and carefully, as poſſible? As one that knows, of what importance it is to you to be rightly informed; and that knows alſo, how ſtrictly he is to anſwer to God, for the ſincerity and care with which the reply is made. May I be enabled to ſpeak as his *oracle* (b), that is, in ſuch a manner, as faithfully to echo back what the ſacred oracles teach!

§. 2.

(a) John iv. 28. (b) 1 Pet. iv. 11.

§. 2. And here, that I may be ſure to follow the ſafeſt guides, and the faireſt examples, I muſt preach ſalvation to you, in the way of repentance toward God, and of *faith in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt* (c): That good old doctrine, which the Apoſtles preached, and which no man can pretend to change, but at the peril of his own ſoul, and of theirs who attend him.

§. 3. I ſuppoſe, that you are by this time, convinced of your guilt and condemnation, and of your own inability to recover yourſelf. Let me nevertheleſs urge you, to feel that conviction yet more deeply, and to impreſs it with yet greater weight upon your ſoul; that you have undone yourſelf, and that in yourſelf is not your *help found* (d). Be perſuaded therefore, expreſly, and ſolemnly, and ſincerely, to give up all ſelf-dependence; which, if you do not guard againſt it, will be ready to return ſecretly, before it is obſerved, and will lead you to attempt building up what you have juſt been deſtroying.

§. 4 Be aſſured, that if ever you are ſaved, you muſt aſcribe that ſalvation entirely to the free grace of God. If, guilty and miſerable as you are, you are not only accepted, but crowned, you muſt lay down your crown with all humble acknowledgment *before the throne* (e). No fleſh muſt glory in his preſence; but he that glorieth, muſt glory in the Lord: For of him are we in Chriſt Jeſus, who of God is made unto us *wiſdom*, and *righteouſneſs*, and *ſanctification*, and *redemption* (f). And you muſt be ſenſible, you are in ſuch a ſtate, as, having none of theſe in yourſelf, to need them in another. You muſt therefore be ſenſible, that you are ignorant and guilty, polluted and inſlaved; or, as our Lord expreſſes it, with regard to ſome who were under a chriſtian profeſſion, that as a ſinner, you are *wretched*, and *miſerable*, and *poor*, and *blind*, and *naked* (g).

§. 5. If theſe views be deeply impreſſed, upon your mind, you will be prepared to receive what I am now to

(c) Acts xx. 21. (d) Hoſea xiii. 9. (e) Rev. iv. 10.
(f) 1 Cor. i. 29, 30, 31. (g) Rev. iii. 17.

to ſay. Hear therefore in a few words your duty, your remedy, and your ſafety; which conſiſts in this, "That "you muſt apply to Chriſt, with a deep abhorrence of "your former ſins, and a firm reſolution of forſaking "them; forming that reſolution in the ſtrength of his "grace, and fixing your dependance on him for your "acceptance with God, even while you are purpoſing "to do your very beſt, and when you have actually "done the beſt you ever will do in conſequence of "that purpoſe."

§. 6. The firſt and moſt important advice that I can give you in preſent circumſtances, is, that you look to Chriſt and apply yourſelf to him. And here, ſay not in your heart, *Who ſhall aſcend into heaven to bring him down to me* (h)? or who ſhall raiſe me up thither to preſent me before him? The bleſſed Jeſus, by whom *all things conſiſt* (i), by whom the whole ſyſtem of them is ſupported, "forgotten as he is by moſt that bear his "name, *is not far from any of us* (k): Nor could he have promiſed to have been, where-ever two or three are met together *in his name* (l), but in conſequence of thoſe truly divine perfections by which he is every where preſent. Would you therefore, O ſinner, deſire to be ſaved? Go to the Saviour. Would you deſire to be delivered? Look to that deliverer: And tho' you ſhould be ſo overwhelmed with guilt, and ſhame, and fear, and horror, that you ſhould be incapable of ſpeaking to him, fall down in this ſpeechleſs confuſion at his feet; and behold him, as the Lamb of God, that taketh away *the ſin of the world* [m.]

§. 7. Behold him therefore with an attentive eye, and ſay, Whether the ſight does not touch, and even melt thy very heart? Doſt thou not feel what a fooliſh, and what a wretched creature thou haſt been; that for the ſake of ſuch low and ſordid gratifications and intereſts, as thoſe which thou haſt been purſuing, thou ſhouldſt thus *kill the Prince of Life* (n)? Behold the deep wounds,

(h) Rom. x. 6. (i) Col. i. 17. (k) Acts. xvii. 27.
(l) Matth. xvii. 20. (m) John i. 29. (n) Acts iii. 15.

wounds, which he bore for thee. Look on him whom thou haſt pierced, and ſurely thou muſt *mourn* [o], unleſs thine heart be hardened into ſtone. Which of thy paſt ſins canſt thou reflect upon, and ſay, "For "this it was worth my while, thus to have injured my "Saviour, and to have expoſed the Son of God to ſuch "ſufferings!" And what future temptations can a-"riſe ſo conſiderable, that thou ſhouldſt ſay, "For the "ſake of this, I will crucify my Lord *again*[p]?" Sinner, thou muſt repent, thou muſt repent of every ſin; and muſt forſake it: But if thou doſt it to any purpoſe, I well know it muſt be at the foot of the croſs. Thou muſt ſacrifice every luſt, even the deareſt; tho' it ſhould be like a right hand, or a right eye [q]: And therefore, that thou mayeſt, if poſſible, be animated to it, I have led thee to that altar, on which Chriſt himſelf was ſacrificed for thee, as an offering of a *ſweet ſmelling ſavour* [r]. Thou muſt yield up thyſelf to God, as one *alive* from the *dead* [s]: And therefore I have ſhewed thee at what a price he purchaſed thee; for thou waſt not redeemed with corruptible things, as ſilver and gold, but with the precious blood of the Son of God, that Lamb without *blemiſh* and without *ſpot* [t]. And now I would aſk thee, as before the Lord, What does thine own heart ſay to it? Art thou grieved for thy former offences? Art thou willing to forſake thy ſins! Art thou willing to become the chearful thankful ſervant of him, who hath purchaſed thee with his own blood?

§. 8. I will ſuppoſe ſuch a purpoſe as this ariſing in thine heart. How determinate it is, and how effectual it may be, I know not: What different views may riſe hereafter, or how ſoon the preſent ſenſe may wear off. But this I aſſuredly know, that thou wilt never ſee reaſon to change theſe views; for however thou mayeſt alter, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt is the ſame *yeſterday*, *to-day*, and *for ever* [u]. And the reaſons, that now recommend repentance,

[o] Zech. xii. 10.
[p] Heb. vi. 6.
[q] Mat. v. 29, 30.
[r] Eph. v. 2.
[s] Rom. vi. 13.
[t] 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.
[u] Heb. xiii. 8.

repentance and faith, as fit and as neceſſary, will continue invariable, as long as the perfections of the bleſſed God are the ſame, and as long as his Son continues the ſame.

§. 9. But while you have theſe views and theſe purpoſes, I muſt remind you, that this is not all which is neceſſary to your ſalvation. You muſt not only purpoſe, but, as God gives opportunity, you muſt act, as thoſe who are convinced of the evil of ſin, and of the neceſſity and excellency of holineſs. And that you may be enabled to do ſo in other inſtances, you muſt in the firſt place, and as the firſt great work of God, (as our Lord himſelf calls it,) believe in him whom God *hath ſent* [x]: You muſt confide in him; "muſt commit "your ſoul into the hands of Chriſt, to be ſaved by "him in his own appointed method of ſalvation." This is the great act of ſaving faith; and I pray God, that you may experimentally know what it means; ſo as to be able to ſay, with the Apoſtle Paul, in the near views of death itſelf, I know whom I have believed, and am perſuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day [y); that great deciſive day, which, if we are Chriſtians, we have always in view. To this I would urge you; and Oh that I could be ſo happy as to engage you to it, while I am illuſtrating it in this and the following addreſſes! be aſſured, you muſt not apply yourſelves immediately to God, abſolutely or in himſelf conſidered, in the neglect of a mediator. It will neither be acceptable to him, nor ſafe for you, to ruſh into his preſence, without any regard to his own ſon, whom he hath appointed to introduce ſinners to him. And if you come otherwiſe, you come as one who is not a ſinner. The very manner of preſenting the addreſs will be interpreted as a denial of that guilt, with which he knows you are chargeable: and therefore he will not admit you, nor ſo much as look upon you. And accordingly, our Lord, knowing how much every man living was concerned in this, ſays in the moſt univerſal terms; no man cometh unto the father but by me (z).

§. 10. Apply

[x] John vi. 29. (y] 2. Tim. i. 12. [z] John xiv. 6.

§. 10. Apply therefore to this glorious redeemer, amiable (as he will appear to every believing eye) in the blood which he ſhed upon the Croſs, and in the wounds which he received there. Go to him, O ſinner, this day, this moment, with all thy ſins about thee. Go juſt as thou art; for if thou wilt never apply to him, till thou art firſt righteous and holy, thou wilt never be righteous and holy at all; nor canſt be ſo on this ſuppoſition, unleſs there were ſome way of being ſo without him; and then there would be no occaſion for applying to him for righteouſneſs and holineſs. It were indeed as if it ſhould be ſaid, that a ſick man ſhould defer his application to a phyſician, till his health is recovered. Let me therefore repeat it without offence, go to him juſt as thou art, and ſay, (Oh that thou may'ſt this moment be enabled to ſay it from thy very ſoul!) "Bleſſed Jeſus, I am ſurely one of the moſt ſinful, and one of the moſt miſerable creatures, that ever fell proſtrate before thee: nevertheleſs I come, becauſe I have heard that thou didſt once ſay, come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt (a). I come, becauſe I have heard, thou didſt graciouſly ſay, him that cometh unto me, I will in no wiſe caſt out (b). O thou prince of peace, O thou king of glory, I am a condemned miſerable ſinner. I have ruined my own ſoul, and am condemned for ever, if thou doſt not help me, and ſave me. I have broken thy father's law, and thine, for thou art one with him (c). I have deſerved condemnation and wrath; and I am, even at this moment, under a ſentence of everlaſting deſtruction: a deſtruction, which will be aggravated by all the contempt which I have caſt upon thee, O thou bleeding lamb of God; for I cannot, and will not diſſemble it before thee, that I have wronged thee, moſt baſely and ungratefully wronged thee, under the character of a Saviour, as well as of a Lord. But now, I am willing to ſubmit to thee; and I have brought my poor trembling ſoul, to lodge it in thine hands, if thou wilt condeſcend to receive it; and if thou doſt not, it muſt periſh. O Lord, I lie at thy

[a] Matt. xi. 28. [b] John vi. 37. [c] John x. 30.

thy feet: ſtretch out thy golden ſceptre that I may live (d)! yea, if it pleaſe the king, let the life of my ſoul be given me at my petition (e)! I have no treaſure, wherewith to purchaſe it: I have no equivalent to give thee for it: but if that compaſſionate heart of thine can find a pleaſure in ſaving one of the moſt diſtreſſed creatures under heaven, that pleaſure thou mayſt here find. O Lord, I have fooliſhly attempted to be mine own ſaviour; but it will not do. I am ſenſible the attempt is vain; and therefore I give it over, and look unto thee. On thee, bleſſed Jeſus, who art ſure and ſtedfaſt, do I deſire to fix my anchor. On thee, as the only ſure foundation, would I build my eternal hopes. To thy teaching, O thou unerring prophet of the Lord, would I ſubmit: Be thy doctrines ever ſo myſterious, it is enough for me, that thou thyſelf haſt ſaid it. To thine atonement, obedience, and interceſſion, O thou holy and ever acceptable high-prieſt, would I truſt. And to thy government, O thou exalted ſovereign, would I yield a willing, delightful ſubjection: In token of reverence and love, I kiſs the ſon (f); I kiſs the ground before his feet. I admit thee, O my Saviour, and welcome thee with unutterable joy, to the throne in my heart. Aſcend it, and reign there for ever! ſubdue mine enemies, O Lord, for they are thine; and make me thy faithful, and zealous ſervant; faithful to death, and zealous to eternity!"

§. 11. Such as this muſt be the language of your very heart before the Lord. But then remember, that in conſequence hereof it muſt be the language of your life too. The unmeaning words of the lips would be a vain mockery. The moſt affectionate tranſport of the paſſions, ſhould it be tranſient and ineffectual, would be like a blaze of ſtraw, preſented inſtead of incenſe at his altar. With ſuch humility, with ſuch love, with ſuch cordial ſelf-dedication and ſubmiſſion of ſoul, muſt thou often proſtrate thyſelf in the preſence of Chriſt: and then thou muſt go away, and keep him in thy view; muſt go away, and live unto God thro' him, denying ungodlineſs

[d] Eſth. iv. 11. (e) Eſth. vii. 3. (f) Pſal. ii. 12.

godlineſs and worldly luſts, and behaving thyſelf righteouſly, and godly, in this vain enſnaring world (g). You muſt make it your care, to ſhew your love by obedience; by forming yourſelf as much as poſſible, according to the temper and manner of Jeſus, in whom you believe. You muſt make it the great point of your ambition, (and a nobler view you cannot entertain,) to be a living image of Chriſt; that ſo far as circumſtances will allow, even thoſe who have heard and read but little of him, may, by obſerving you, in ſome meaſure ſee and know what kind of life that of the bleſſed Jeſus was. And this muſt be your conſtant care, your prevailing character, as long as you live. You muſt follow him, whitherſoever he leads you; muſt follow, with a croſs on your ſhoulder, when he commands you to take it up (h); and ſo muſt be faithful unto death, expecting the crown of life (i).

§. 12. This, ſo far as I have been able to learn from the word of God, is the way to ſafety and glory; the ſureſt, the only way you can take. 'Tis the way, which every faithful miniſter of Chriſt has trod, and is treading; and the way, to which, as he tenders the ſalvation of his own ſoul, he muſt direct others. We cannot, we would not alter it, in favour of ourſelves, or of our deareſt friends. It is the way, in which alone, ſo far as we can judge, it becomes the bleſſed God to ſave his apoſtate creatures. And therefore, reader, I beſeech and intreat you, ſeriouſly to conſider it; and let your own conſcience anſwer, as in the preſence of God, whether you are willing to acquieſce in it, or not. But know that to reject it is thine eternal death. For as there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be ſaved (k), but this of Jeſus of Nazareth, ſo there is no other method but this, in which Jeſus himſelf will ſave us.

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[g] Tit. ii. 12. (h) Matt. xvi. 24. (i) Rev. ii. 10. (k) Acts iv. 12.

The Sinner DELIBERATING *on the expediency of falling in with this method of Salvation.*

"CONSIDER, O my ſoul, what anſwer wilt thou return to ſuch propoſals as theſe! ſurely, if I were to ſpeak the firſt dictate of this corrupt and degenerate heart, it would be, this is a hard ſaying, and who can bear it (l)! to be thus humbled, thus mortified, thus ſubjected! to take ſuch a yoke upon me, and to carry it as long as I live! to give up every darling luſt, tho' dear to me as a right eye, and ſeemingly neceſſary as a right hand! to ſubmit, not only my life, but my heart, to the command and diſcipline of another! to have a maſter there, and ſuch a maſter, as will controul many of its favourite affections, and direct them quite into another channel! a maſter, who himſelf repreſents his commands, by taking up the croſs and following him! to adhere to the ſtricteſt rules of godlineſs and ſobriety, of righteouſneſs and truth; not departing from them, in any allowed inſtance, great or ſmall upon any temptation, for any advantage, to eſcape any inconvenience and evil, no, not even for the preſervation of life itſelf; but, upon a proper call of providence, to act as if I hated even my own life (m)! Lord, it is hard to fleſh and blood! and yet I perceive and feel, there is one demand yet harder than this.

"With all theſe precautions, with all theſe mortifications, the pride of my nature would find ſome inward reſource of pleaſure, might I but ſecretly think that I had been my own ſaviour; that my own wiſdom, and my own reſolution, had broken the bands and chains of the enemy; and that I had drawn out my own treaſures, the price with which my redemption was purchaſed. But muſt I lie down before another as guilty and condemned, as weak and helpleſs? and muſt the obligation be multiplied, and muſt a mediator have his ſhare too? Muſt I be ſtripped of every pleaſing pretence to righteouſneſs, and ſtand in this reſpect upon a level with the vileſt of

(l) John vi. 60. [m] Luke xiv, 26.

men? Stand at the bar amongſt the greateſt criminals, pleading guilty with them, and ſeeking deliverance by that very act of grace, whereby they have obtained it?

"I dare not deliberately ſay, this method is unreaſonable. My conſcience teſtifies, that I have ſinned and cannot be juſtified before God, as an innocent, and obedient creature. My conſcience tells me, that all theſe humbling circumſtances are fit: That it is fit, a convicted criminal ſhould be brought upon his knees: That a captive rebel ſhould give up the weapons of his rebellion and bow before his ſovereign, if he expect his life. Yea my reaſon, as well as my conſcience, tells me, that it is fit and neceſſary, that if I am ſaved at all, I ſhould be ſaved from the power and love of ſin, as well as from the condemnation of it; and that if ſovereign mercy gives me a new life, after having deſerved eternal death, it is moſt fit, I ſhould yield myſelf to God, as alive from the dead (n). But, Oh wretched man that I am, I feel a law in my members, that wars againſt the law of my mind (o), and oppoſes the conviction of my reaſon and conſcience. Who ſhall deliver me from this bondage? Who ſhall make me willing to do that, which I know in my own ſoul to be moſt expedient? O Lord, ſubdue my heart, and let it not be drawn ſo ſtrongly one way, while the nobler powers of my mind would direct it another! conquer every licentious principle within, that it may be my joy to be ſo wiſely governed, and reſtrained! eſpecially, ſubdue my pride, that lordly corruption, which ſo ill ſuits an impoveriſhed and a condemned creature; that thy way of ſalvation be made amiable to me, in proportion to the degree in which it is humbling! I feel a diſpoſition to linger in Sodom, but Oh be merciful to me, and pull me out of it (p), before the ſtorm of thy flaming vengeance fall, and there be no more eſcaping!"

CHAP.

[n] Rom. vi. 13. [o] Rom. vii. 23. 24. (p) Gen. xix. 16,

CHAP. X.

The Sinner ſeriouſly urged and intreated to accept of Salvation in this Way.

Since many who have been impreſſed with theſe things ſuffer the impreſſion to wear off in vain, §. 1. *Strongly as the caſe ſpeaks for itſelf, ſinners are to be intreated to accept this ſalvation.* §. 2. *Accordingly the reader is intreated,* (1.) *By the Majeſty and mercy of God:* §. 3. (2.) *By the dying love of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt:* §. 4. (3.) *By the regard due to fellow-creatures:* §. 5. (4.) *By the worth of his own immortal ſoul.* §. 6. *The matter is ſolemnly left with the reader, as before God.* §. 7. *The ſinner yielding to theſe intreaties, and declaring his acceptance of ſalvation by Chriſt.*

§. 1. THUS far have I often known convictions and impreſſions to ariſe, (if I might judge by the ſtrongeſt appearances,) which after all have worn off again. Some unhappy circumſtance of external temptation, ever joined by the inward reluctance of an unſanctified heart to this holy and humbling ſcheme of redemption, has been the ruin of multitudes. And thro' the deceitfulneſs of ſin, they have been hardened (a), till they ſeem to have been utterly deſtroyed, and that without remedy (b). And therefore, O thou immortal creature, who art now reading theſe lines, I beſeech thee, that while affairs are in this critical ſituation while there are theſe balancings of mind, between accepting and rejecting that glorious goſpel, which, in the integrity of my heart, I have now been laying before you, you would once more give me an attentive audience, while I plead in God's behalf, (ſhall I ſay?) or rather in your own: While as an embaſſador from Chriſt, and as though God

(a) Heb. iii. 23. (b) Prov. xxix. 1.

did beſeech you by me, I pray you in Chriſt's ſtead, that you would be reconciled to God (c); and would not after theſe awakenings and theſe enquiries, by a madneſs which it will ſurely be the doleful buſineſs of a miſerable eternity to lament, reject this compaſſionate counſel of God towards you.

§. 2. One would indeed imagine, there ſhould be no need of importunity here. One would conclude, that as ſoon as periſhing ſinners are told, that an offended God is ready to be reconciled; that he offers them a full pardon for all their aggravated ſins; yea, that he is willing to adopt them into his family now, that he may at length admit them to his heavenly preſence; all ſhould with the utmoſt readineſs and pleaſure embrace ſo kind a meſſage, and fall at his feet in ſpeechleſs tranſports of aſtoniſhment, gratitude, and joy. But alas, we find it much otherwiſe. We ſee multitudes quite unmoved, and the impreſſions which are made on many more, are feeble and tranſient. Leſt it ſhould be thus with you, O reader, let me urge the meſſage with which I have the honour to be charged: let me intreat you to be reconciled to God, and to accept of pardon and ſalvation in the way in which it is ſo freely offered to you.

§. 3. I intreat you, "by the majeſty of that God, in whoſe name I come;" whoſe voice fills all heaven with reverence and obedience. He ſpeaks not in vain, to legions of angels; but if there could be any contention among thoſe bleſſed ſpirits, it would be, who ſhould be firſt to execute his commands. O let him not ſpeak in vain to a wretched mortal! I intreat you, "by the terrors of his wrath," who could ſpeak to you in thunder; who could by one ſingle act of his will, cut off this precarious life of yours, and ſend you down to hell. I beſeech you "by his mercies, by his tender mercies;" by the bowels of his compaſſion, which ſtill yearn over you; as thoſe of a parent over a dear ſon, over a tender child, whom notwithſtanding his former ungrateful rebellions, he earneſtly remembers ſtill (d) I beſeech and intreat you,

(c) Cor. v. 20. (d) Jer. xxxi. 20.

you, "by all this paternal goodneſs," that you do not (as it were) compel him to loſe the character of the gentle parent, in that of the righteous judge; ſo that (as he threatens with regard to thoſe whom he hath juſt called his ſons and his daughters;) a fire ſhall be kindled in his anger, which ſhould burn into the loweſt hell (e)

§. 4. I beſeech you farther, "by the name and love of our dying Saviour." I beſeech you, by all the condeſcenſion of his incarnation; by that poverty to which he voluntarily ſubmitted, that you might be inriched with eternal treaſures (f); by all the gracious invitations which he gave, which ſtill ſound in his word, and ſtill coming (as it were) warm from his heart, are ſweeter than honey or the honey-comb (g). I beſeech you, by all his glorious works of power and of wonder, which were alſo works of love. I beſeech you, by the memory of the moſt benevolent perſon, and the moſt generous friend. I beſeech you, by the memory of what he ſuffered, as well as of what he ſaid and did; by the agony which he endured in the garden, when his body was covered with a dew of blood (h) I beſeech you, by all that tender diſtreſs which he felt, when his deareſt friends forſook him and fled (i), and his blood thirſty enemies dragged him away, like the meaneſt of ſlaves, and like the vileſt of criminals. I beſeech you, by the blows and bruiſes, by the ſtripes and laſhes, which this injured ſovereign endured while in their rebellious hands; by the ſhame and ſpitting, from which he hid not that kind and venerable countenance (k). I beſeech you, by the purple robe, the ſceptre of reed, and the crown of thorns, which this king of glory wore, that he might ſet us among the princes of heaven (l). I beſeech you, by the heavy burden of the croſs, under which he panted, and toiled, and fainted, in the painful way to Golgotha (m), that he might free us from the burden of our ſins. I beſeech you, by the remembrance of thoſe rude nails, that tore the veins and arteries,

(e) Deut xxxii. 19 22. (f) 2 Cor. viii. 9. (g) Pſal. xix, 10. (h) Luke xxii. 44. (i) Matt. xxvi. 56. (k) Iſai. l. 6. (l) Pſal. cxiii. 8. (m) John xix. 17.

teries, the nerves and tendons of his ſacred hands and feet; and by that invincible, that triumphant goodneſs, which, while the iron pierced his fleſh, engaged him to cry out, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do (n). I beſeech you, by that unutterable anguiſh which he bore, when lifted up upon the croſs, and extended there as on a rack, for ſix painful hours, that you open your hearts to thoſe attractive influences which have drawn to him thouſands and ten thouſands (o). I beſeech you, by all that inſult and deriſion, which the Lord of glory bore there [p]; by that parching thirſt which could hardly obtain the relief of vinegar [q]: by that doleful cry, ſo aſtoniſhing in the mouth of the only begotten of the father, my God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me [r]? I beſeech you, by that grace that ſubdued and pardoned a dying malefactor [s]; by that compaſſion for ſinners, by that compaſſion for you, which wrought in his heart, long as its vital motion continued, and which ended not when he bowed his head, ſaying, it is finiſhed, and gave up the ghoſt [t]. I beſeech you, by the triumphs of that reſurrection by which he was declared to be the Son of God with power, by the ſpirit of holineſs which wrought to accompliſh it [u]; by that gracious tenderneſs which attempered all thoſe triumphs, when he ſaid to her out of whom he had caſt ſeven devils, concerning his diſciples, who had treated him ſo baſely, go, tell my brethren, I aſcend unto my father and your father, unto my God and your God [x]. I beſeech you, by that condeſcenſion, with which he ſaid to Thomas, when his unbelief had made ſuch an unreaſonable demand, reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thine hand and put it to my ſide; and be not faithleſs but believing [y]. I beſeech you, by that generous and faithful care of his people, which he carried up with him to the regions of glory, and which engaged him to ſend down his ſpirit, in that rich profuſion of miraculous gifts, to ſpread the progreſs of his ſaving word (z).

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(n) Luke xxii. 34. (o) John xii. 32. (p) Matt. xxvii. 29. 44.
(q) John xix. 28, 29. (r) Matt. xxvii. 46. (s) Luke xxiii. 42. 43.
(t) John xix. 30. (u) Rom. i. 4. (x) John xx. 17. (y) John xx. 27.
(z) Acts. ii. 33.

I beſeech you, by that voice of ſympathy and power, with which he ſaid to Saul, while injuring his church, Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me [a]? by that generous goodneſs, which ſpared that proſtrate enemy, when he lay trembling at his feet, and raiſed him to ſo high a dignity, as to be not inferior to the very chiefeſt Apoſtles [b]. I beſeech you by the memory of all that Chriſt hath already done, by the expectation of all he will farther do for his people. I beſeech you, at once, by the ſceptre of his grace, and by the ſword of his juſtice, with which all his incorrigible enemies ſhall be ſlain before him [c], that you do not triſle away theſe precious moments, while his ſpirit is thus breathing upon you; that you do not loſe an opportunity which may never return, and on the improvement of which your eternity depends.

§. 5. I beſeech you, "by all the bowels of compaſ-"ſion which you owe to the faithful miniſters of "Chriſt;" who are ſtudying and labouring, preaching and praying, wearing out their time, exhauſting their ſtrength, and, very probably, ſhortening their lives, for the ſalvation of your ſoul, and of ſouls like yours. I beſeech you, by the affection with which all that love our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity, long to ſee you brought back to him. I beſeech you, by the friendſhip of the living, and by the memory of the dead; by the ruin of thoſe who have triſled away their days, and are periſhed in their ſins, and by the happineſs of thoſe who have embraced the goſpel, and are ſaved by it. I beſeech you, by the great expectation of that important day, when the Lord Jeſus ſhall be *revealed* from heaven (d); by the terrors of a *diſſolving world* (e); by the ſound of the Archangel's *trumpet* (f), and of that infinitely more awful ſentence, *come ye bleſſed*, and *depart ye curſed*, with which that grand ſolemnity ſhall cloſe (g).

§. 6. I beſeech you finally, "by your own precious "and immortal ſoul;" by the ſure proſpect of a dying bed, or of a ſudden ſurprize into the inviſible ſtate; and as

[a] Acts ix. 4. [b] 2 Cor. xii. 11. [c] Luke xix. 27.
[d] 2 Theſſ. i. 7. [e] 2 Peter iii. 10. [f] 1 Theſſ. iv. 16.
[g] Matth. xxv. 34, 41.

as you would feel one ſparkle of comfort in your departing ſpirit when your fleſh and your heart are failing. I beſeech you, by your own perſonal appearance before the tribunal of Chriſt, (for a perſonal appearance it muſt be, even to them who now ſit on thrones of their own;) by all the tranſports of the bleſſed, and by all the agonies of the damned, the one or the other of which muſt be your everlaſting portion. I affectionately intreat and beſeech you, in the ſtrength of all theſe united conſiderations, as you will anſwer it to me, who may in that day be ſummoned to teſtify againſt you; and, which is unſpeakably more, as you will anſwer it to your own conſcience, as you will anſwer it to the eternal Judge; that you diſmiſs not theſe thoughts, theſe meditations, and theſe cares, till you have brought matters to a happy iſſue; till you have made a reſolute choice of Chriſt, and his appointed way of ſalvation, and till you have ſolemnly devoted yourſelf to God, in the bonds of an everlaſting covenant.

§. 7. And thus I leave the matter before you, and before the Lord. I have told you my errand; I have diſcharged my embaſſy. Stronger arguments I cannot uſe; more endearing and more awful conſiderations I cannot ſuggeſt. Chuſe therefore, whether you will go out (as it were) clothed in ſackloth, to caſt yourſelf at the feet of him who now ſends you theſe equitable and gracious terms of peace and pardon: Or, whether you will hold it out, till it appears ſword in hand, to reckon with you for your treaſons and your crimes, and for this neglected embaſſy among the reſt of them. Fain would I hope the beſt; nor can I believe, that this labour of love ſhall be ſo unſucceſful, that not one ſoul ſhall be brought to the foot of Chriſt, in cordial ſubmiſſion and humble faith. *Take* with you therefore words, and *turn* unto the Lord (h); and Oh that thoſe who follow, might, in effect at leaſt, be the genuine language of every one that reads them.

The

(h) Hoſea xiv. 2.

The SINNER *yielding to theſe Intreaties, and declaring his Acceptance of Salvation by* CHRIST.

"BLESSED LORD, it is enough! it is too much! ſurely there needs not this variety of arguments, this importunity of perſuaſion, to court me to be happy, to prevail upon me to accept of pardon, of life, of eternal glory. Compaſſionate Saviour, my ſoul is ſubdued; ſo that I truſt, the language of thy grief is become that of my penitence, and I may ſay, my heart is melted like wax in the *midſt of my bowels* [i].

"O gracious Redeemer! I have already neglected thee too long. I have too often injured thee; have crucified thee afreſh by my guilt and impenitence, as if I had taken pleaſure in putting thee to an open *ſhame* [k]. But my heart now bows itſelf before thee, in humble unfeigned ſubmiſſion. I deſire to make no terms with thee but theſe,——that I may be entirely thine. I chearfully preſent thee with a blank, intreating thee, that thou wilt do me the honour to ſignify upon it, what is thy pleaſure. Teach me, O Lord, what is thy pleaſure. Teach me, O Lord, what thou wouldſt have me to do! For I deſire to learn the leſſon, and to learn it that I may practiſe it. If it be more than my feeble powers can anſwer, thou wilt, I hope, give me more ſtrength; and in that ſtrength I will ſerve thee. Oh receive a ſoul, which thou haſt made willing to be thine!

"No more, O bleſſed Jeſus, no more is it neceſſary to beſeech and intreat me. Permit me rather to addreſs myſelf to thee, with all the importunity of a periſhing ſinner, that, at length, ſees and knows there is ſalvation in *no other* [l]! Permit me now, Lord, to come, and throw myſelf at thy feet, like a helpleſs outcaſt, that hath no ſhelter but in thy generous compaſſion! like one purſued by the avenger of blood, and ſeeking earneſtly into the city of *refuge* [m]!

"I wait for the Lord, my ſoul doth wait; and in thy

[i] Pſal. xxii. 14. [k] Heb. vi. 6. [l] Acts iv. 12.
[m] Joſh. xx. 2—3.

thy *word* do I *hope* [n], that thou wilt receive me *graciouſly* [o]. My ſoul confides in thy goodneſs, and adores it. I adore the patience which has borne with me ſo long; and the grace that now makes me heartily willing to be thine; to be thine on thine own terms, thine on any terms. Oh ſecure this treacherous heart to thyſelf! Oh unite me to thee in ſuch inſeparable bonds, that none of the allurements of fleſh and blood, none of the vanities of an inſnaring world, none of the ſolicitations of ſinful companions, may draw me back from thee, and plunge me into new guilt and ruin! Be ſurety, O Lord, for thy ſervant, *for good* [p]; that I may ſtill keep my hold on thee, and ſo on eternal life; till at length I know more fully, by joyful and everlaſting experience, how compleat a Saviour thou art! *Amen.*

[n] Pſal. cxxx. 5. [o] Hoſ. xiv. 2. [p] Pſal. cxix. 122.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

A ſolemn Addreſs to thoſe who will not be perſuaded to fall in with the Deſign of the Goſpel.

Univerſal ſucceſs not to be expected: §. 1. *Yet, as unwilling abſolutely to give up any, the author addreſſes.* (1.) *To thoſe who doubt of the truth of chriſtianity, urging an enquiry into its evidences, and directing to proper methods for that purpoſe.* §. 2—4. (2.) *To thoſe who determine to give it up without further examination,* §. 5. *and preſume to ſet themſelves to oppoſe it.* §. 6. (3.) *To thoſe who ſpeculatively aſſent to chriſtianity as true, and yet will ſit down without any practical regard to its moſt important and acknowledged truths. Such are diſmiſſed with a repreſentation of the abſurdity of their conduct on their own principles;* §. 7—8. *with a ſolemn warning of its foul conſequences;* §. 9.—10. *and a compaſſionate prayer,* (*introduced* §. 11.) *which concludes the chapter, and this part of the work.*

§. 1. I Would humbly hope, that the preceeding chapters will be the means of awakening ſome ſtupid and inſenſible ſinners; the means of convincing them of their need of goſpel ſalvation, and of engaging ſome cordially to accept it. Yet, I cannot flatter myſelf ſo far, as to hope this ſhould be the caſe with regard to all, into whoſe hands this book ſhall come. What am I, alas, better than *my fathers* [a], or better than my brethren, who have in all ages been repeating their complaints, with regard to multitudes, that they have ſtretched out their hands all day long to a diſobedient and gainſaying people [b]? Many ſuch may, perhaps, be found in the number of my readers: Many, on whom, neither conſiderations of terror, nor

[a] 1 Kings xix. 4. (b) Rom. x. 21.

of love, will make any deep and lasting impression: Many, who as our Lord learnt by experience to express it, when we *pipe* to them, will not *dance*, and when we *mourn* unto them will not *lament* (c). I can say no more to persuade them, if they make light of what I have already said. Here therefore we must part; in this chapter I must take my leave of them; and, Oh that I could do it in such a manner, as to fix at parting some conviction upon their hearts; that tho' I seem to leave them for a little while, and send them back to review again the former chapters, as those in which alone they have any present concern, they might soon, as it were, overtake me again, and find a suitableness in the remaining part of this discourse, which at present they cannot possibly find. Unhappy creatures! I quit you, as a physician quits a patient whom he loves, and is just about to give over as incurable: He returns again and again, and re-examines the several symptoms, to observe whether there be not some one of them more favourable than the rest, which may encourage a renewed application.

§. 2. So would I once more return to you. You do not find in yourself any disposition to embrace the gospel, to apply yourself to Christ, to give yourself up to the service of God, and to make religion the business of your life. But if I cannot prevail upon you to do this, let me engage you, at least to answer me, or at least to answer to your own conscience, "why you "will not do it?" Is it owing to any secret disbelief of the great principles of religion? If it be, the case is different from what I have yet considered, and the cure must be different. This is not a place to combat with the scruples of infidelity. Nevertheless I would desire you seriously to enquire, "how far those scruples ex-"tend." Do they affect only some particular doctrines of the gospel, on which my argument hath turned; or do they affect the whole christian revelation? Or do they reach yet farther, and extend themselves to natural

(c) Mat. xi. 17.

ral religion, as well as revealed, ſo that it ſhould be a doubt with you, whether there be any God, and providence, and future ſtate, or not? As theſe caſes are all different, ſo it will be of great importance to diſtinguiſh the one from the other; that you may know, on what principles to build as certain, in the examination of thoſe concerning which you are yet in doubt. But whatever theſe doubts are, I would farther aſk you, "How long have they continued, and what method "have you taken to get them reſolved?" Do you imagine, that in matters of ſuch moment, it will be an allowable caſe for you to triſle on, neglecting to enquire into the evidence of theſe things, and then plead your not being ſatisfied in that evidence, as an excuſe for not acting according to them? Muſt not the principles of common ſenſe aſſure you, that if theſe things be true, (as when you talk of doubting about them, you acknowledge it, at leaſt, poſſible they may,) they are of infinitely greater importance than any of the affairs of life, whether of buſineſs or pleaſure, for the ſake of which you neglect them? Why then do you continue indolent and unconcerned, from week to week, and from month to month, which probably conſcience tells you is the caſe?

§. 3. Do you aſk, "What method you ſhould take "to be reſolved?" It is no hard queſtion. Open your eyes: Set yourſelf to think: Let conſcience ſpeak; and verily do I believe, that if it be not ſeared in an uncommon degree, you will find ſhroud forebodings of the certainty, both of natural and revealed religion, and of the abſolute neceſſity of repentance, faith and holineſs, to a life of future felicity. If you are a perſon of any learning, you cannot but know, by what writers, and in what treatiſes, theſe great truths are defended. And if you are not, you may find, in almoſt every town and neighbourhood, perſons capable of informing you in the main evidences of chriſtianity, and of anſwering ſuch ſcruples againſt it as unlearned minds may have met with. Set yourſelf then, in the name of God, immediately to conſider the matter. If you ſtudy at all,

bend your ſtudies cloſe this way; and trifle not with mathematics, or poetry, or hiſtory, or law, or phyſic, (which are all comparatively as light as a feather,) while you neglect this. Study the argument, as for your life; for much more than life depends on it. See how far you are ſatisfied, and why that ſatisfaction reaches no farther. Compare evidences on both ſides. And above all, conſider the deſign and tendency of the New Teſtament. See to what it will lead you, and all them that cordially obey it; and then ſay whether it be not good. And conſider, how naturally its truth is connected with its goodneſs. Trace the character and ſentiments of its authors, whoſe living image (if I may be allowed the expreſſion,) is ſtill preſerved in their writings. And then aſk your own heart, Can you think this was a forgery? an impious cruel forgery? For ſuch it muſt have been, if it were a forgery at all; a ſcheme to mock God and to ruin men, even the beſt of men, ſuch as reverenced conſcience, and would abide all extremities for what they apprehended to be truth. Put the queſtion to your own heart, Can I in my conſcience believe it to be ſuch an impoſture? Can I look up to an omniſcient God, and ſay, "O Lord, thou knoweſt, that it is in reverence to thee, and in love to truth and virtue, that I reject this book, and the method to happineſs here laid down?"

§. 4. But there are difficulties in the way.——And what then? Have thoſe difficulties never been cleared? Go to the living advocates for chriſtianity, to thoſe of whoſe abilities, candor, and piety, you have the beſt opinion; if your prejudices will give you leave to have a good opinion of any ſuch: tell them your diſficulties: hear their ſolutions: weigh them ſeriouſly, as thoſe who know they muſt anſwer it to God: and while doubts continue, follow the truth as far as it will lead you, and take heed that you do not impriſon it in unrighteouſneſs (d). Nothing appears more inconſiſtent and abſurd, than for a man ſolemnly to pretend diſſatisfaction in the evidences

[d] Rom. i. 28.

ces of the goſpel, as a reaſon why he cannot in conſcience be a thorough chriſtian; when yet at the ſame time he violates the moſt apparent dictates of reaſon and conſcience, and lives in vices condemned even by the heathens. O ſirs, Chriſt has judged concerning ſuch, and judged moſt righteouſly and moſt wiſely; they do evil, and therefore they hate the light, neither come they to the light, leſt their deeds ſhould be made manifeſt, and be reproved(e). But there is a light, that will make manifeſt and reprove their works, to which they ſhall be compelled to come, and the painful ſcrutiny of which, they ſhall be forced to abide.

§. 5. In the mean time, if you are determined to enquire no farther into the matter now, give me leave at leaſt, from a ſincere concern, that you may not heap upon your head more aggravated ruin, to intreat you, that you would be cautious how you expoſe yourſelf to yet greater danger, by what you muſt yourſelf own to be unneceſſary, I mean, attempts to prevent others from believing the truth of the goſpel. Leave them, for God's ſake, and for your own, in poſſeſſion of thoſe pleaſures, and thoſe hopes, which nothing but chriſtianity can give them; and act not, as if you were ſolicitous to add to the guilt of an infidel the tenfold damnation, which they, who have been the perverters and deſtroyers of the ſouls of others, muſt expect to meet, if that goſpel which they have ſo adventurouſly oppoſed ſhall prove, as it certainly will, a ſerious, and to them a dreadful truth.

§. 6. If I cannot prevail here, but the pride of diſplaying a ſuperiority of underſtanding ſhould bear on ſuch a reader, even in oppoſition to his own favourite maxims of the innocence of error, and the equality of all religions conſiſtent with ſocial virtue, to do his utmoſt to trample down the goſpel with contempt; I would however diſmiſs him with one propoſal, which I think the importance of the affair may fully juſtify. If you have done with your examination into chriſtianity, and determine to live and conduct yourſelf as if it were aſſuredly

(e) John iii. 20.

falſe, ſit down then, and make a memorandum of that determination. Write it down; "On ſuch a day of ſuch a year, I deliberately reſolved, that I would live and die rejecting Chriſtianity myſelf, and doing all I could to overthrow it. This day I determined, not only to renounce all ſubjection to, and expectation from, Jeſus of Nazareth; but alſo to make it a ſerious part of the buſineſs of my life, to deſtroy, as far as I poſſibly can, all regard to him in the minds of others, and to exert my moſt vigorous efforts, in the way of reaſoning or of ridicule, to ſink the credit of his religion, and if it be poſſible to root it out of the world; in calm ſteady defiance of that day, when his followers ſay, he ſhall appear in ſo much majeſty and terror to execute the vengeance threatened to his enemies." Dare you write this, and ſign it? I firmly believe, that many a man, who would be thought a Deiſt, and endeavours to increaſe the number, would not. And if you in particular dare not to do it, whence does that ſmall remainder of caution ariſe? The cauſe is plain. There is in your conſcience ſome ſecret apprehenſion, that this rejected, this oppoſed, this derided goſpel, may after all prove true. And if there be ſuch an apprehenſion, then let conſcience do its office, and convict you of the impious madneſs of acting, as if it were moſt certainly and demonſtrably falſe. Let it tell you at large, how poſſible it is that haply you may be found fighting againſt God (f): that, bold as you are in defying the terrors of the Lord, you may poſſibly fall into his hands; may chance to hear that deſpiſed ſentence, which when you hear it from the mouth of the eternal judge, you will not be able to deſpiſe: I will repeat it again, in ſpite of all your ſcorn, you may hear the king ſay to you, depart accurſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels (g). And now, go and pervert and burleſque the ſcripture, go and lampoon the character of its heroes, and ridicule the ſublime diſcourſes of its prophets and its apoſtles; as ſome have done, who have left little behind them but the ſhort lived monuments of their ignorance, their

[f] Acts v. 39. [g] Matt. xxv. 41.

their profaneneſs, and their malice. Go and ſpread like them the banners of infidelity, and pride thyſelf in the number of credulous creatures liſted under them. But take heed, leſt the inſulted Galilean direct a ſecret arrow to thine heart, and ſtop thy licentious breath, before it has finiſhed the next ſentence thou wouldſt utter againſt him.

§. 7. I will turn myſelf from the deiſt or the ſceptick, and direct my addreſs to the nominal chriſtian; if he may upon any terms be called a chriſtian, who feels not, after all I have pleaded, a diſpoſition to ſubject himſelf to the government and the grace of that ſaviour, whoſe name he bears. O ſinner, thou art turning away from my Lord, in whoſe cauſe I ſpeak; but let me earneſtly intreat thee ſeriouſly to conſider, why thou art turning away, and to whom thou wilt go from him, whom thou acknowledgeſt to have the words of eternal life (h). You call yourſelf a chriſtian, and yet will not by any means be perſuaded to ſeek ſalvation in good earneſt from and thro' Jeſus Chriſt, whom you call your maſter and Lord. How do you for a moment excuſe this negligence to your own conſcience? If I had urged you on any controverted point, it might have altered the caſe. If I had laboured hard to make you the diſciple of any particular party of chriſtians, your delay might have been more reaſonable: nay, perhaps, your refuſing to acquieſce might have been an act of apprehending duty to our common maſter. But is it matter of controverſy amongſt chriſtians, whether there be a great, holy, and righteous God; and whether ſuch a Being, whom we agree to own, ſhould be reverenced and loved, or neglected and diſhonoured? Is it matter of controverſy, whether a ſinner ſhould deeply and ſeriouſly repent of his ſins, or whether he ſhould go on in them? Is it a diſputed point amongſt us, whether Jeſus became incarnate, and died upon the croſs, for the redemption of ſinners, or no? And if it be not, can it be diſputed by them who believe him to be the Son of God and the ſaviour of men, whether a ſinner ſhould ſeek to him,

[h] John vi. 68.

him, or neglect him? Or whether one who profeſſes to be a chriſtian, ſhould depart from iniquity, or give himſelf up to the practice of it? Are the precepts of our great maſter written ſo obſcurely in his word, that there ſhould be room ſeriouſly to queſtion, whether he require a devout, holy, humble, ſpiritual, watchful, ſelf-denying life, or whether he allow the contrary? Has Chriſt after all his pretenſions of bringing life and immortality to light, left it more uncertain than he found it, whether there be any future ſtate of happineſs and miſery, or for whom theſe ſtates are reſpectively intended? Is it a matter of controverſy, whether God will, or will not bring every work into judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil (i)? or whether, at the concluſion of that judgment, the wicked ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment, and the righteous into life eternal (k)? You will not, I am ſure, for very ſhame pretend any doubt about theſe things, and yet call yourſelf a chriſtian. Why then will you not be perſuaded to lay them to heart, and to act as duty and intereſt ſo evidently require? Oh ſinner, the cauſe is too obvious; a cauſe indeed quite unworthy of being called a reaſon. It is becauſe thou art blinded and beſotted with thy vanities and thy luſts. It is becauſe thou haſt ſome periſhing trifle, which charms thy imagination and thy ſenſes, ſo that it is dearer to thee than God and Chriſt, than thy own ſoul and its ſalvation. 'Tis in a word, becauſe thou art ſtill under the influence of that carnal mind, which, whatever pious forms it may ſometimes admit and pretend, is enmity againſt God, and is not ſubject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (l). And therefore, thou art in the very caſe of thoſe wretches, concerning whom our Lord ſaid in the days of his fleſh, ye will not come unto me that ye might have life (m), and therefore ye ſhall die in your ſins (n).

§. 8. In this caſe I ſee not what it can ſignify, to renew thoſe expoſtulations and addreſſes which I have made in the former chapters. As our bleſſed redeemer ſays

[i] Eccleſ. xii. 14. [k] Matt. xxv. 46. [l] Rom. viii. 7. [m] John vi. 40. [n] John viii. 24.

ſays, of thoſe who rejected his goſpel, ye have both ſeen and hated, both me and my father (o); ſo may I truly ſay with regard to you, I have endeavoured to ſhew you in the plaineſt and the cleareſt words, both Chriſt and the father; I have urged the obligations you are under to both; I have laid before you your guilt, and your condemnation; I have pointed out the only remedy; I have pointed out the rock, on which I have built my own eternal hopes, and the way in which alone I expect ſalvation. I have recommended thoſe things to you, which, if God gives me an opportunity, I will with my dying breath earneſtly and affectionately recommend to my own children, and to all the deareſt friends that I have upon earth, who may then be near me; eſteeming it the higheſt token of my friendſhip, the ſureſt proof of my love to them. And if believing the goſpel to be true, you reſolve to reject it; I have nothing farther to ſay, but that you muſt abide by the conſequence. Yet as Moſes, when he went out from the preſence of Pharaoh for the laſt time, finding his heart yet more hardened by all the judgments and deliverances with which he had formerly been exerciſed, denounced upon him God's paſſing thro' the land in terror to ſmite the firſt-born with death, and warned him of that great and lamentable cry which the ſword of the deſtroying angel ſhould raiſe throughout all his realm (p): So will I, ſinner, now when I am quitting thee, ſpeak to thee yet again, whether thou wilt hear, or whether thou wilt forbear (q), and denounce that much more terrible judgment, which the ſword of divine vengeance, already whetted and drawn, and bathed as it were in heaven, (r), is preparing againſt thee; which ſhall end in a much more dreadful cry, tho' thou wert greater and more obſtinate than that haughty Monarch. Yes, ſinner, that I may, with the Apoſtle Paul, when turning to others who are more like to hear me, ſhake my raiment, and ſay, I am pure from your blood (s); I will once more tell what the end of theſe things will be. And Oh, that I could ſpeak to purpoſe! Oh that I could thunder

[o] John xv. 24. [p] Exod. xi. 4, 6. [q] Ezek. ii. 7. [r] Iſai. xxxiv. 5. [s] Acts xviii. 6.

der in thine ear ſuch a peal of terror, as might awaken thee, and be too loud to be drown'd in all the noiſe of carnal mirth, or to be deadn'd by thoſe dangerous opiates, with which thou art contriving to ſtupify conſcience.

§. 9. Seek what amuſements and entertainments thou wilt, O ſinner, I tell thee, if thou wert equal in dignity, and power, and magnificence, to the great monarch of Babylon, thy pomp ſhall be brought down to the grave, and all the ſound of thy viols; the worm ſhall be ſpread under thee, and the worm ſhall cover thee (t), Yes, ſinner, the end of theſe things is death (u); death in its moſt terrible ſenſe to thee, if this continue thy governing temper. Thou canſt not avoid it; and, if it be poſſible for any thing that I can ſay to prevent, thou ſhalt not forget it. Your ſtrength is not the ſtrength of ſtones, nor is your fleſh of braſs (x). You are acceſſible to diſeaſes as well as others; and if ſome ſudden accident do not prevent it, we ſhall ſoon ſee, how heroically you will behave yourſelf on a dying bed, and in the near views of eternity. You, that now deſpiſe Chriſt, and triſle with his goſpel, we ſhall ſee you droop and languiſh; ſhall ſee all your reliſh for your carnal recreations, and your vain companions, loſt.—And if perhaps one and another of them bolt in upon you, and is brutiſh and deſperate enough to attempt to entertain a dying man with a gay ſtory, or a profane jeſt, we ſhall ſee how you will reliſh it. We ſhall ſee, what comfort you will have in reflecting on what is paſt, or what hope in looking forward to what is to come. Perhaps trembling and aſtoniſhed, you will then be enquiring in a wild kind of conſternation, what you ſhould do to be ſaved; calling for the miniſters of Chriſt, whom you now deſpiſe for the earneſtneſs with which they would labour to ſave your ſoul; and it may be, falling into a delirium, or dying convulſions, before they can come. Or perhaps we may ſee you, flattering yourſelf, thro' a long lingering illneſs, that you ſhall ſtill recover, and putting off any ſerious reflection and

(t) Iſai. xiv. 11. (u) Rom. vi. 21. (x) Job vi. 12.

and converſation, for fear it ſhould overſet your ſpirits. And the cruel kindneſs of friends and phyſicians, as if they were in league with Satan to make the deſtruction of your ſoul as ſure as poſſible, may perhaps abet this fatal deceit.

§. 10. And if any of theſe probable caſes happen, that is, in ſhort, unleſs a miracle of grace ſnatch you as a brand out of the burning, when the flames have as it were already taken hold of you; all theſe gloomy circumſtances, which paſs in the chambers of illneſs and the beds of death, are but the forerunners of infinitely more dreadful things. Oh, who can deſcribe them! who can imagine them! when ſurviving friends are tenderly mourning over the breathleſs corpſe, and taking a fond farewel of it before it is laid to conſume away in the dark and ſilent grave, into what hands, O ſinner, will thy ſoul be fallen! What ſcenes will open upon thy ſeparate ſpirit, even before thy deſerted fleſh be cold, or thy ſightleſs eyes are cloſed! It ſhall then know, what it is to return to God to be rejected by him, as having rejected his goſpel and Son, and deſpiſed the only treaty of reconciliation; and that ſuch a one, ſo amazingly condeſcending and gracious. Thou ſhalt know, what it is to be diſowned by Chriſt, whom thou haſt refuſed to entertain; and what it is, as the certain and immediate conſequence of that, to be left in the hands of the malignant ſpirits of hell. There will be no more friendſhip then: None to comfort, none to alleviate thy agony and diſtreſs: But, on the contrary, all around thee labouring to increaſe them. Thou ſhalt paſs away the intermediate years of the ſeparate ſtate, in dreadful expectation, and bitter outcries of horror and remorſe. And then, thou ſhalt hear the trumpet of the Archangel, in whatever cavern of that gloomy world thou art lodged. Its ſound ſhall penetrate thy priſon, where, doleful and horrible as it is, thou ſhalt nevertheleſs wiſh, that thou mighteſt ſtill be allowed to hide thy guilty head, rather than ſhew it before the face of that awful judge, before whom heaven and

and earth are flying away (y) But thou muſt come forth, and be reunited to a body, now formed for ever to endure agonies, which in this mortal ſtate would have diſſolved it in a moment. You would not be perſuaded to come to Chriſt before: You would ſtupidly neglect him, in ſpight of reaſon, in ſpight of conſcience, in ſpight of all the tendereſt ſolicitations of the goſpel, and the repeated admonitions of its moſt faithful miniſters. But now, ſinner, you ſhall have an interview with him; if that may be called an interview, in which you will not dare to lift up your head to view the face of your tremendous and inexorable judge. There at leaſt, how diſtant ſoever the time of our life and the place of our abode may have been, there ſhall we ſee, how courageouſly your hearts will endure, and how ſtrong your hands will be, when the Lord doth this (z). There ſhall I ſee thee, O reader, whoever thou art that goeſt on in thine impenitency, among thouſands and ten thouſands of deſpairing wretches, trembling and confounded. There ſhall I hear thy cries among the reſt, rending the very heavens in vain. The Judge will riſe from his tribunal with majeſtic compoſure, and leave thee to be hurried down to thoſe everlaſting burnings, to which his righteous vengeance hath doomed thee, becauſe thou wouldſt not be ſaved from them. Hell ſhall ſhut its mouth upon thee for ever, and the ſad echo of thy groans and outcries ſhall be loſt amidſt the hallelujahs of heaven, to all that find mercy of the Lord in that day.

§. 11. This will moſt aſſuredly be the end of theſe things: And thou, as a chriſtian profeſſeſt to know, and to believe it. It moves my heart at leaſt, if it moves not thine. I firmly believe, that every one, who himſelf obtains ſalvation and glory, will bear ſo much of our Saviour's image in wiſdom and goodneſs, in zeal for God, and a ſteady regard to the happineſs of the whole creation, that he will behold this ſad ſcene with calm approbation, and without any painful commotion of mind. But as yet I am fleſh and blood; and therefore

(y) Rev, xx. 11. (z) Ezek. xxii. 14.

fore my bowels are troubled, and mine eyes often overflow with grief, to think, that wretched ſinners will have no more compaſſion upon their own ſouls; to think, that in ſpight of all admonition they will obſtinately run upon final everlaſting deſtruction. It will ſignify nothing here to add a prayer, or a meditation, for your uſe, poor creature! you will not meditate! you will not pray! yet as I have often poured out my heart in a prayer over a dying friend, when the force of his diſtemper has rendered him incapable of joining with me; ſo will I now apply myſelf to God for you, O unhappy creature! And if you diſdain ſo much as to read what my compaſſion dictates; yet I hope, they who have felt the power of the goſpel on their own ſouls, as they cannot but pity ſuch as you, will join with me in ſuch cordial, tho' broken petitions, as theſe.

A Prayer in behalf of an impenitent SINNER, *in the Caſe deſcribed above.*

"ALMIGHTY GOD! with thee all things are *poſſible* (a): To thee therefore do I humbly apply myſelf in behalf of this dear immortal ſoul, which thou here ſeeſt periſhing in its ſins, and hardening itſelf againſt that everlaſting goſpel, which has been the power of God to the ſalvation of ſo many thouſands and millions. Thou art witneſs, O bleſſed God, thou art witneſs to the plainneſs and ſerioufneſs, with which the meſſage has been delivered. It is in thy preſence that theſe awful words have been written; and in thy preſence have they been read. Be pleaſed therefore to record it in the book of thy remembrance, that ſo if this wicked man dieth in his iniquity, after the warning has been ſo plainly and ſo ſolemnly given him, his blood may not be required at my hand (b), nor at the hand of that chriſtian friend, whoever he is, by whom this book has been put into his, with a ſincere deſire for the ſalvation of his ſoul. Be witneſs, O bleſſed Jeſus, in

[a] Matth. xix. 26. [b] Ezek. xxxiii. 8—9.

the day in which thou ſhalt judge the ſecrets of all hearts (c), that thy goſpel hath been preached to this hardened wretch, and ſalvation by thy blood hath been offered him, tho' he continue to deſpiſe it. And may thy unworthy meſſenger be unto God a ſweet ſavour in Chriſt, in this very ſoul, even tho' it ſhould at laſt periſh (d)!

"But, Oh that, after all his hardneſs and impenitence, thou wouldſt ſtill be pleaſed, by the ſovereign power of thine efficacious grace, to awaken and convert him! Well do we know, Oh thou Lord of univerſal nature, that he who made the ſoul, can cauſe the ſword of conviction to come near and enter into it.—Oh that, in thine infinite wiſdom and love, thou wouldſt find out a way to interpoſe, and ſave this ſinner from death, from eternal death! Oh that, if it be thy bleſſed will, thou wouldſt immediately do it! thou knoweſt, Oh God, he is a dying creature: Thou knoweſt, that if any thing be done for him, it muſt be done quickly: Thou ſeeſt, in the book of thy wiſe and gracious decrees, a moment marked which muſt ſeal him up in an unchangeable ſtate: Oh that thou wouldſt lay hold on him, while he is yet joined to the living, and hath hope (e)! thy immutable laws in the diſpenſation of grace forbid, that a ſoul ſhould be converted and renewed after its entrance on the inviſible world: Oh let thy ſacred ſpirit work while he is yet as it were within the ſphere of his operations! Work, O God, by whatever method thou pleaſeſt; only have mercy upon him! O Lord, have mercy upon him, that he ſink not into thoſe depths of damnation and ruin, on the very brink of which, he ſo evidently appears! Oh that thou wouldſt bring him, if that be neceſſary, and ſeem to thee moſt expedient, into any depths of calamity and diſtreſs! Oh that, with Manaſſeh, he may be taken in the thorns, and laden with the fetters of affliction, if that may but cauſe him to ſeek the God of his fathers (f)?

"But

(c) Rom. ii. 16. (d) 2 Cor. ii. 15. (e) Eccl. ix. 4.
(f) 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11—12.

" But I preſcribe not to thine infinite wiſdom. Thou haſt diſplayed thy power in glorious and aſtoniſhing inſtances; which I thank thee, that I have ſo circumſtantially known, and by the knowledge of them have been fortified againſt the raſh confidence of thoſe who weakly and arrogantly pronounce that to be impoſſible, which is actually done. Thou haſt, I know, done that by a ſingle thought in retirement, when the happy man reclaimed by it hath been far from means, and far from ordinances, which neither the moſt awful admonitions, nor the moſt tender intreaties, nor the moſt terrible afflictions, nor the moſt wonderful deliverances had been able to effect.

" Glorify thy name, O Lord, and glorify thy grace, in the method which to thine infinite wiſdom ſhall ſeem moſt expedient! Only grant, I beſeech thee, with all humble ſubmiſſion to thy will, that this ſinner may be ſaved! Or if not, that the labour of this may not be altogether in vain; but that if ſome reject it to their aggravated ruin, others may hearken and live! that thoſe thy ſervants, who have laboured for their deliverance and happineſs, may view them in the regions of glory, as the ſpoils which thou haſt honoured them as the inſtruments of recovering; and may join with them in the Hallelujahs of heaven, to him, who hath loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood, and hath made us of condemned rebels, and accurſed polluted ſinners; kings and prieſts unto God; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever! Amen (g)."

[g] Rev. i. 5—6.

CHAP. XII.

An Addreſs to a Soul ſo overwhelmed with a Senſe of the Greatneſs of its Sins, that it dares not apply itſelf to Chriſt with any Hope of Salvation.

The caſe deſcribed at large, §. 1—4. *as it frequently occurs.* §. 5. *Granting all that the dejected ſoul charges on itſelf,* §. 6. *the invitations and promiſes of Chriſt give hope.* §. 7. *The reader urged, under all his burthens and fears, to an humble application to him:* §. 8. *Which is accordingly exemplified in the concluding reflection and prayer.*

§. 1. I Have now done with thoſe unhappy creatures who deſpiſe the goſpel, and with thoſe who neglect it. With pleaſure do I now turn myſelf to thoſe, who will hear me with more regard. Among the various caſes, which now preſent themſelves to my thoughts, and demand my tender affectionate, reſpectful care, there is none more worthy of compaſſion, than that which I have mentioned in the title of this chapter; none which requires a more immediate attempt of relief.

§. 2. It is very poſſible, ſome afflicted creature may be ready to cry out, "It is enough: Aggravate my grief, and my diſtreſs no more. The ſentence you have been ſo awfully deſcribing, as what ſhall be paſſed and executed on the impenitent and unbelieving, is my ſentence; and the terrors of it are my terrors. For mine iniquities are gone up unto the heavens, and my tranſgreſſions have reached unto the clouds (a). My caſe is quite ſingular. Sure there never was ſo great a ſinner as I. I have received ſo many mercies, I have enjoyed ſo many advantages, I have heard ſo many invitations of goſpel grace; and yet my heart has been ſo hard, and my nature is ſo exceeding ſinful, and the number and

(a) Rev. xviii. 5.

and aggravating circumſtances of my provocations have been ſuch, that I dare not hope. It is enough, that God hath ſupported me thus long: It is enough, that after ſo many years of wickedneſs, I am yet out of hell. Every day's reprieve is a mercy, at which I am aſtoniſhed. I lie down, and wonder, that death and damnation have not ſeized me in my walks the day paſt. I ariſe, and wonder, that my bed hath not been my grave; wonder, that my ſoul is not ſeparated from fleſh, and ſurrounded with devils and damned ſpirits.

§. 3. "I have indeed heard the meſſage of ſalvation; but alas, it ſeems no meſſage of ſalvation to me. There are happy ſouls that have hope; and their hope is indeed in Chriſt, and the Grace of God manifeſted in him. But then they feel in their hearts an encouragement to apply to him; whereas I dare not do it. Chriſt and grace are things, in which, I fear, I have no part, and muſt expect none. There are exceeding rich and precious promiſes, in the word of God: but they are to me a ſealed book, and are hid from me as to any perſonal uſe. I know, Chriſt is able to ſave: I know, he is willing to ſave ſome. But that he ſhould be willing to ſave me, ſuch a polluted, ſuch a provoking creature, as God knows, and as conſcience knows, I have been, and to this day am; this I know not how to believe: And the utmoſt that I can do towards believing it, is to acknowledge that it is not abſolutely impoſſible, and that I do not yet lie down in compleat deſpair; tho' alas, I ſeem upon the very borders of it, and expect every day and hour to fall into it."

§. 4. I ſhould not perhaps have entered ſo fully into this caſe, if I had not ſeen many in it; and I will add, reader, for your encouragement, if it be your caſe, ſeveral who are in the number of the moſt eſtabliſhed, chearful, and uſeful chriſtians. And I hope, divine grace will add you to the reſt, if out of theſe depths you be enabled to cry unto God (b); and tho', like Jonah, you may ſeem to be caſt out from his preſence, yet ſtill, with Jonah, you may look towards his holy temple (c).

§. 5.

(b) Pſal. cxxx. 1. (c) Jonah ii. 4.

§. 5. Let it not be imagined, that it is in any neglect of that bleſſed Spirit, whoſe office it is to be the great comforter, that I now attempt to reaſon you out of this diſconſolate frame: For it is as the great ſource of reaſon, that he deals with rational creatures; and it is in the uſe of rational means and conſiderations, that he may moſt juſtly be expected to operate. Give me leave therefore, to addreſs myſelf calmly to you, and to aſk you, What reaſon you have for all theſe paſſionate complaints and accuſations againſt yourſelf? What reaſon have you to ſuggeſt, that your caſe is ſingular, when ſo many have told you, they have felt the ſame? What reaſon have you to conclude ſo hardly againſt yourſelf, when the goſpel ſpeaks in ſuch favourable terms? Or what reaſon to imagine, that the gracious things it ſays, are not intended for you? You know indeed more of the corruptions of your own heart, than you know of the hearts of others: And you make a thouſand charitable excuſes for their viſible failings and infirmities, which you make not for your own. And it may be, ſome of thoſe, whom you admire as eminent ſaints when compared with you, are on their part humbling themſelves in the duſt as unworthy to to be numbered amongſt the leaſt of God's people, and wiſhing themſelves like you, in whom they think they ſee much more good, and much leſs of evil, than in themſelves.

§. 6. But to ſuppoſe the worſt, What if you were really the vileſt ſinner that ever lived upon the face of the earth? What if your iniquities had gone up unto the heavens every day, and your tranſgreſſions had reached unto the clouds (d); reached thither with ſuch horrid aggravations, that earth and and heaven ſhould have had reaſon to deteſt you as a monſter of impiety? Admitting all this, is any thing too hard for the Lord (e)? Are any ſins, of which a ſinner can repent, of ſo deep a dye, that the blood of Chriſt cannot waſh them away? Nay tho' it would be daring wickedneſs and monſtrous folly, for any to ſin that grace may abound (f), yet had you indeed raiſed your account beyond all that divine grace

(d) Rev. xviii. 5. (e) Gen. xviii. 14. (f) Rom. vi 1.

grace has ever yet pardoned, who ſhould limit the Holy One of Iſrael (g)? Or who ſhould pretend to ſay, that it was impoſſible that God might for your very wretchedneſs chuſe you out from others, to make you a monument of mercy, and a trophy of hitherto unparallelled grace? The Apoſtle Paul ſtrongly intimates this to have been the caſe with regard to himſelf: And why might not you likewiſe, if indeed the chief of ſinners, obtain mercy: that in you, as the chief, Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew forth all long ſuffering, for a pattern to them who ſhall hereafter believe (h?

§. 7. Gloomy as your apprehenſions are, I would aſk you plainly, Do you in your conſcience think, that Chriſt is not able to ſave you? What! is he not able to ſave even to the uttermoſt, them that come unto God by him (i)? Yes, you will ſay, abundantly able to do it; but I dare not imagine, that he will do it. And how do you know that he will not? He has helped the very greateſt ſinners of all that have yet applied themſelves to him: And he has made the offers of grace and ſalvation in the moſt engaging and encouraging terms: If any man thirſt, let him come unto me, and drink (k): Let him that is athirſt, come; and whoſoever will, let him take of the water of life freely (l): Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt (m): And once more, him that cometh unto me I will in no wiſe caſt out (n). True, will you ſay, none that are given him by the Father: Could I know, I were of that number, I could then apply chearfully to him. But, dear reader, let me intreat you to look into the text itſelf, and ſee, whether that limitation be expreſly added there. Do you there read, none of them whom the Father hath given me ſhall be caſt out? The words are in a much more encouraging form: And why ſhould you fruſtrate his wiſdom and goodneſs, by ſuch an addition of your own? Add not to his words, leſt he reprove thee (o): Take them as they ſtand,

(g) Pſal. lxxvii. 41. (h) 1 Tim. i. 15—16. (i) Heb. vii. 25.
(k) John vii. 37. (l) Rev. xxii. 17. (m) Mat. xi. 28.
(n) John vi. 39. (o) Prov. xxx. 6.

ſtand, and drink in the conſolation of them. Our Lord knew into what perplexity ſome ſerious minds might poſſibly be thrown by what he had before been ſaying, all that the Father hath given me, ſhall come unto me; and therefore as it were on purpoſe to balance it, he adds thoſe gracious words, Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wiſe, by no means, on no conſideration whatſoever, caſt out.

§. 8. If therefore you are already diſcouraged and terrified at the greatneſs of your ſins, do not add to their weight and number that one greater and worſe than all the reſt, a diſtruſt of the faithfulneſs and grace of the bleſſed Redemer. Do not, ſo far as in you lies, oppoſe all the purpoſes of his love to you. O diſtreſſed ſoul, whom doſt thou dread? To whom doſt thou tremble to approach? Is there any thing ſo terrible, in a crucified Redeemer, in the Lamb that was ſlain? If thou carrieſt thy ſoul almoſt ſinking under the burthen of its guilt, to lay it down at his feet, what doſt thou offer him, but the ſpoil which he bled and died to recover and poſſeſs? And did he purchaſe it ſo dearly, that he might reject it with diſdain? Go to him directly, and fall down in his preſence, and plead that miſery of thine, which thou haſt now been pleading in a contrary view, as an engagement to your own ſoul to make the application, and as an argument with the compaſſionate Saviour to receive you. Go, and be aſſured, that where ſin hath abounded, there grace ſhall much more abound (p). Be aſſured, that if one ſinner, can promiſe himſelf a more certain welcome than another, it is not he that is leaſt guilty and miſerable, but he that is moſt deeply humbled before God under a ſenſe of that miſery and guilt, and lies the loweſt in the apprehenſion of it.

REFLECTIONS *on the encouragements, ending in an humble and earneſt application to* Chriſt *for mercy.*

"O My ſoul, what ſayeſt thou to theſe things? Is there not at leaſt a poſſibility of help from Chriſt?

(p) Romans v. 20.

Chriſt? And is there a poſſibility of help any other way? Is any other name given under heaven, whereby we can be ſaved? I know, there is none (q). I muſt then ſay, like the lepers of Iſrael (r), if I ſit here, I periſh; and if I make my application in vain, I can but die. But peradventure, he may ſave my ſoul alive. I will therefore ariſe, and go unto him; or rather, believing him here, by his ſpiritual preſence, ſinful and miſerable as I am, I will this moment fall down on my face before him, and pour out my ſoul unto him.

"Bleſſed Jeſus, I preſent myſelf unto thee, as a wretched creature, driven indeed by neceſſity to do it. For ſurely were not that neceſſity urgent and abſolute, I ſhould not dare for very ſhame to appear in Thine holy and majeſtic preſence. I am fully convinced, that my ſins and my follies have been inexcuſably great; more than I can expreſs, more than I can conceive. I feel a ſource of ſin, in my corrupt and degenerate nature, which pours out iniquity, as a fountain ſends out its water, and makes me a burthen and a terror to myſelf. Such aggravations have attended my tranſgreſſions, that it looks like preſumption, ſo much as to aſk pardon for them. And yet, would it not be greater preſumption to ſay, that they exceed thy mercy, and the efficacy of thy blood; to ſay, that thou haſt power and grace enough to pardon and ſave only ſinners of a lower order, while ſuch as I lie out of thy reach? Preſerve me from that blaſphemous imagination! preſerve me from that unreaſonable ſuſpicion! Lord, thou canſt do all things, neither is there any thought of mine heart with-holden from thee (s). Thou art indeed, as thy word declares, able to ſave unto the uttermoſt (t). And therefore, breaking thro' all the oppoſitions of ſhame and fear, that would keep me from thee, I come and lie down as in the duſt before thee. Thou knoweſt, O Lord, all my ſins, and all my follies (u).——I cannot, and I hope I may ſay, I would not, diſguiſe them before thee, or ſet myſelf to find out plauſible excuſes. Accuſe me, Lord, as thou pleaſeſt;

(q) Acts iv. 12. (r) 2 Kings vii. 4. (s) Job xlii. 2. (t) Heb. vii. 25. (u) Pſal. lxix. 5.

eſt; and I will ingenuouſly plead guilty to all thine accuſations. I will own myſelf as great a ſinner, as thou calleſt me: But I am ſtill a ſinner, that comes unto thee for pardon. If I muſt die, it ſhall be ſubmitting, and owning the juſtice of the fatal ſtroke. If I periſh, it ſhall be, laying hold, as it were, on the horns of the Altar; laying myſelf down at thy foot-ſtool, tho' I have been ſuch a rebel againſt thy throne. Many have received a full pardon there; have met with favour even beyond their hopes. And are all thy compaſſions, O bleſſed Jeſus, exhauſted? And wilt thou now begin to reject an humble creature, who flies to thee for life, and pleads nothing but mercy and free grace? Have mercy upon me, O moſt gracious redeemer, have mercy upon me, and let my life be precious in thy ſight (x)! Oh do not reſolve to ſend me down to that ſtate of final miſery and deſpair, from which it was thy gracious purpoſe to deliver and ſave ſo many!

"Spurn me not away, O Lord, from thy preſence, nor be offended when I preſume to lay hold on thy royal robe, and ſay that I cannot and will not let thee go, till my ſuit is granted (y)! Oh remember, that all my hopes of obtaining eternal happineſs, and avoiding everlaſting, helpleſs, hopeleſs deſtruction, are anchored upon thee; they hang upon thy ſmiles, or drop at thy frown. Oh have mercy upon me, for the ſake of this immortal ſoul of mine! or if not for the ſake of mine alone, for the ſake of many others, who may, on the one hand be encouraged by thy mercy to me, or on the other, may be greatly wounded and diſcouraged by my helpleſs deſpair! I beſeech thee, O Lord, for thine own ſake, and for the diſplay of thy father's rich and ſovereign grace! I beſeech thee by the blood thou didſt ſhed on the croſs; I beſeech thee by the covenant of grace and peace, into which the father did enter with thee for the ſalvation of believing and repenting ſinners, ſave me! ſave me, O Lord, who earneſtly deſire to repent and believe! I am indeed a ſinner, in whoſe final and everlaſting deſtruction thy juſtice might be greatly glorified: But Oh, if thou

(x) 2 Kings i. 14. (y) Gen. xxxii. 26.

thou wilt pardon me, it will be a monument raiſed to the honour of thy grace, and the efficacy of thy blood, in proportion to the degree in which the wretch, to whom thy mercy is extended, was mean and miſerable without it. Speak, Lord, by thy bleſſed ſpirit, and baniſh my fears! look unto me with love and grace in thy countenance, and ſay to me, as in the days of thy fleſh thou didſt to many an humble ſupplicant, thy ſins are forgiven thee, go in peace!"

CHAP. XIII.

The doubting Soul more particularly aſſiſted in its Enquiries as to the Sincerity of its Faith and Repentance.

Tranſient impreſſions liable to be miſtaken for converſion, which would be a fatal error. §. 1. *General ſchemes for ſelf-examination.* §. 2. *Particular enquiries; (1.) What views there have been of ſin?* §. 3. *(2.) What views there have been of Chriſt?* §. 4. *As to the need the ſoul has of him;* §. 5. *And its willingneſs to receive him, with a due ſurrender of heart to his ſervice.* § 6. *Nothing ſhort of this, ſufficient.* §. 7. *The ſoul ſubmitting to divine examination, the ſincerity of its Faith and Repentance.*

§. 1. IN conſequence of all the ſerious things, which have been ſaid in the former chapters, I hope it will be no falſe preſumption to imagine, that ſome religious impreſſions may be made on hearts which had never felt them before; or may be revived, where they have formerly grown cold and languid. Yet I am very ſenſible, and I deſire that you may be ſo, how great danger there is of ſelf-flattery on this important head; and how neceſſary it is to caution men, againſt too haſty a concluſion that they are really converted, becauſe they have felt

ſome

ſome warm emotion on their minds, and have reformed the groſs irregularities of their former conduct. A miſtake here might be infinitely fatal: It may prove the occaſion of that falſe peace, which ſhall lead a man to bleſs himſelf in his own heart, and to conclude himſelf ſecure while all the threatenings and curſes of God's law are ſounding in his ears, and lie indeed directly againſt him (a): While in the mean time he applies to himſelf a thouſand promiſes in which he has no ſhare; which may prove therefore like generous wine to a man in an high fever, or ſtrong opiates to one in a lethargy. The ſtony ground received the word with joy, and a promiſing harveſt ſeemed to be ſpringing up; yet it ſoon withered away (b), and no reaper filled his arms with it. Now that this may not be the caſe with you, that all my labours and yours hitherto may not be loſt, and that a vain dream of ſecurity and happineſs may not plunge you deeper in miſery and ruin, give me leave to lead you into a ſerious enquiry into your own heart; that ſo you may be better able to judge of your caſe, and to diſtinguiſh between what is at moſt being only near the kingdom of heaven, and becoming indeed a member of it.

§. 2. Now this depends upon the ſincerity of your faith in Chriſt, when faith is taken in its largeſt extent, as explained above; that is, as comprehending repentance, and that ſteady purpoſe of new and univerſal obedience, of which, wherever it is real, faith will aſſuredly be the vital principle. Therefore to aſſiſt you in judging of your ſtate, give me leave to aſk you, or rather to intreat you to aſk yourſelf, what views you have had, and now have, of ſin, and of Chriſt? And what your future purpoſes are, with regard to your conduct in the remainder of life that may lie before you? I ſhall not reaſon largely upon the ſeveral particulars I ſuggeſt under theſe heads, but rather refer you to your own reading and obſervation, to judge how agreeable they are to the word of God, the great rule, by which our characters muſt quickly be tried, and our eternal ſtate unalterably determined.

§. 3. Enquire

(a) Deut. xxix. 19. 20. (b) Matt. xiii. 5. 6.

§. 3. Enquire ſeriouſly, in the firſt place, what views you have had of ſin, and what ſentiments you have felt in your ſoul with regard to it: There was a time, when it wore a flattering aſpect, and made a fair inchanting appearance, ſo that all your heart was charmed with it, and it was the very buſineſs of your life to practiſe it. But you have ſince been undeceived. You have felt it bite like a ſerpent, and ſting like an adder (c). You have beheld it with an abhorrence, far greater than the delight which it ever gave you. So far it is well. It is thus with every true penitent, and with ſome I fear, who are not of that number. Let me therefore enquire farther, whence aroſe this abhorrence? Was it merely from a principle of ſelf-love? Was it merely becauſe you had been wounded by it? Was it merely becauſe you had thereby brought condemnation and ruin upon your own ſoul? Was there no ſenſe of its deformity, of its baſeneſs, of its malignity, as committed againſt the bleſſed God, conſidered as a glorious, a bountiful, and a merciful being? Were you never pierced by the apprehenſion of its vile ingratitude? And as for thoſe purpoſes which have ariſen in your heart againſt it, let me beſeech you to reflect, how they have been formed, and how they have hitherto been executed. Have they been univerſal? Have they been reſolute? And yet amidſt all that reſolution, have they been humble? When you declared war with ſin, was it with every ſin? And is it an irreconcileable war, which you determine, by divine grace, to puſh on till you have entirely conquered it, or die in the attempt? And are you accordingly active in your endeavours to ſubdue and deſtroy it? If ſo, what are the fruits worthy of repentance which you bring forth (d)? It does not, I hope, all flow away in floods of grief: Have you ceaſed to do evil? Are you learning to do well (e)? Doth your reformation ſhew, that you repent of your ſins; or do your renewed relapſes into ſin prove, that you repent even of what you call your repentance? Have you an inward abhorrence of all ſin, and an unfeigned zeal againſt it? And doth that produce a care to

(c) Prov. xxiii. 32. (d) Luke iii. 8. [e] Iſa. i. 16. 17.

guard againſt the occaſions of it, and temptations to it? Do you watch againſt the circumſtances that have inſnared you? And do you particularly double your guard againſt that ſin which does moſt eaſily beſet you (f)? Is that laid aſide, that the chriſtian race may be run; laid aſide with a firm determination, that you will return to it no more, that you will hold no more parley with it, that you will never take another ſtep towards it?

§. 4. Permit me alſo farther to enquire, 'What your views of Chriſt have been?' Have you been fully convinced, that there muſt be a correſpondence ſettled between him and your ſoul? And do you ſee and feel, that you are not only to pay him a kind of diſtant homage, and tranſient compliment, as a very wiſe, benevolent, and excellent perſon, whoſe name and memory you have a reverence for; but that, as he lives and reigns, he is ever near you, and always obſerving you, ſo you muſt look to him, muſt approach to him, muſt humbly tranſact buſineſs with him, and that, buſineſs of the higheſt importance, on which your ſalvation depends?

§. 5. You have been brought to enquire, wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf before the moſt high God (g)? And once perhaps you were thinking of ſacrifices, which your own ſtores might have been ſufficient to furniſh out. Are you now convinced, they will not ſuffice; and that you muſt have recourſe to the lamb which God hath provided? Have you had a view of Jeſus, as taking away the ſin of the world (h)? As made a ſin-offering for us, tho' he knew no ſin, that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him (i)? have you viewed him, as perfectly righteous in himſelf; and deſpairing of being juſtified by any righteouſneſs of your own, have you ſubmitted to the righteouſneſs of God (k)? Has your heart ever been brought to a deep conviction of this important truth, that if ever you are ſaved at all, it muſt be thro' Chriſt; that if ever God extend mercy to you at all it muſt be for his ſake; that if ever you are fixed on the temple of God above, you muſt

[f] Heb. xii. 1. [g] Mic. vi. 6. [h] John i. 29. [i] 2 Cor. v. 21. [k] Rom. x. 3.

muſt ſtand there as an everlaſting trophy of that victory which Chriſt has gained over the powers of hell, who would otherwiſe have triumphed over you?

6. 6. Our Lord ſays, look unto me, and be ye ſaved (l): He ſays, if I be lifted up, I ſhall draw all men unto me (m). Have you looked to him, as the only ſaviour? Have you been drawn unto him, by that ſacred magnet, the attracting influence of his dying love? Do you know what it is, to come to Chriſt as a poor, weary, and heavy-laden ſinner, that you may find reſt (n)? Do you know what it is in a ſpiritual ſenſe, to eat the fleſh and drink the blood of the Son of Man (o); that is, to look upon Chriſt crucified, as the great ſupport of your ſoul, and to feel a deſire after him, earneſt as the appetite of nature after its neceſſary food? Have you known what it is, cordially to ſurrender yourſelf to Chriſt, as a poor creature whom love has made his property? Have you committed your immortal ſoul to him, that he may purify and ſave it; that he may govern it by the dictates of his word, and the influences of his ſpirit; that he may uſe it for his glory; that he may appoint it to what exerciſe and diſcipline he pleaſes, while it dwells here in fleſh; and that he may receive it at death, and fix it among thoſe ſpirits, who with perpetual ſongs of praiſe ſurround his throne, and are his ſervants for ever? Have you heartily conſented to this? And do you, on this account of the matter, renew your conſent? Do you renew it deliberately and determinately, and feel your whole ſoul, as it were, ſaying *Amen*, while you read this? If this be the caſe, then I can with great pleaſure give you (as it were) the right hand of fellowſhip, and ſalute and embrace you as a ſincere diſciple of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, as one who is delivered from the power of darkneſs, and is tranſlated into the kingdom of the Son of God (p). I can then ſalute you in the Lord, as one to whom, as a miniſter of Jeſus, I am commiſſioned and charged to ſpeak comfortably, and to tell you, not that I abſolve you from your ſins, for it is a ſmall matter to be judged

[l] Iſa. xlv. 22. [m] John xii. 32. [n] Mat. xi. 28. [o] John vi. 53. [p] Col. i. 15.

judged of man's judgment, but that the bleſſed God himſelf abſolveth you; that you are one, to whom he hath ſaid in his goſpel, and is continually ſaying, your ſins are forgiven you (q); therefore go in peace, and take the comfort of it.

§. 7. But if you are a ſtranger to theſe experiences, and to this temper which I have now deſcribed, the great work is yet undone; you are an impenitent and unbelieving ſinner, and the wrath of God abideth on you (r). However you may have been awakened and alarmed, whatever reſolutions you may have formed for amending your life, how right ſoever your notions may be, how pure ſoever your forms of worſhip, how ardent ſoever your zeal, how ſevere ſoever your mortification, how humane ſoever your temper, how inoffenſive ſoever your life may be, I can ſpeak no comfort to you. Vain are all your religious hopes, if there has not been a cordial humiliation before the preſence of God for all your ſins; if there has not been this avowed war declared againſt every thing diſpleaſing to God; if there has not been this ſenſe of your need of Chriſt, and of your ruin without him; if there has not been this earneſt application to him, this ſurrender of your ſoul into his hands by faith, this renounciation of yourſelf, that you might fix on him the anchor of your hope; if there has not been this unreſerved dedication of yourſelf to be at all times, and in all reſpects, the faithful ſervant of God through him; and if you do not with all this acknowledge, that you are an unprofitable ſervant, who have no other expectation of acceptance or of pardon, but only thro' his righteouſneſs and blood, and thro' the riches of divine grace in him; I repeat it again, that all your hopes are vain, and you are building on the ſand (s). The houſe you have already raiſed muſt be thrown down to the ground, and the foundation be removed and laid anew, or you and all your hopes will ſhortly be ſwept away with it, and buried under it in everlaſting ruin.

The

[q] Luke vii. 48. [r] John iii. 38. [s] Mat. vii. 26.

The ſoul ſubmitting to divine examination, the ſincerity of its Repentance and Faith.

"O Lord God, thou ſearcheſt all hearts, and trieſt the reins of the children of men (t). Search me, O Lord, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and ſee if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlaſting (u). Doth not conſcience, O Lord, teſtify in thy preſence, that my repentance and faith are ſuch as have been deſcribed, or at leaſt that it is my earneſt prayer, that they may be ſo? Come therefore, O thou bleſſed ſpirit, who art the author of all grace and conſolation, and work this temper more fully in my ſoul! Oh repreſent ſin to mine eyes in all its moſt odious colours, that I may feel a mortal and irreconcilable hatred to it! Oh repreſent the majeſty and mercy of the bleſſed God in ſuch a manner, that my heart may be alarmed, and that it may be melted! ſmite the rock, that the waters may flow (x); waters of genuine, undiſſembled and filial repentance! convince me, O thou bleſſed ſpirit, of ſin, of righteouſneſs, and of judgement (y)! ſhew me, that I have undone myſelf; but that my help is found in God alone (z), in God through Chriſt, in whom alone he will extend compaſſion and help to me! according to thy peculiar office, take of Chriſt and ſhew it unto me (a)! ſhew me his power to ſave! ſhew me his willingneſs to exert that power! teach my faith to behold him, as extended on the croſs, with open arms, and with a pierced bleeding ſide; and ſo telling me in the moſt forcible language, what room there is in his very heart for me! may I know what it is to have my whole heart ſubdued by love; ſo ſubdued as to be crucified with him (b); to be dead to ſin, and dead to the world, but alive unto God thro' Jeſus Chriſt (c)! in his power and love may I confide! to him may I without any reſerve commit my ſpirit! his image may I bear! his

(t) Jer. xvii. 10. (u) Pſal. cxxxix. 23. 24. [x] Pſal. lxxviii. 20. [y] John xvi. 8. [z] Hoſ. xiii. 9. (a) John xvi. 15. (b) Rom. vi. (c) Rom. vi. 11.

laws may I obſerve! his ſervice may I purſue! and may I remain, thro' time and eternity, a monument of the efficacy of his goſpel, and the trophy of his victorious grace!

"Oh bleſſed God! if there be any thing wanting towards conſtituting me a ſincere chriſtian, diſcover it to me, and work it in me! beat down, I beſeech thee, every falſe and preſumptuous hope, how coſtly ſoever that building may have been which is thus lain in ruins, and how proud ſoever I may have been of its vain ornaments! let me know the worſt of my caſe, be that knowledge ever ſo diſtreſsful; and if there be remaining danger, Oh let my heart be fully ſenſible of it, ſenſible while yet there is remedy!

"If there be any ſecret ſin yet lurking in my ſoul, which I have not ſincerely renounced, diſcover it to me, and rend it out of my heart, tho' it ſhould have ſhot its roots ever ſo deep, and ſhould have wrap'd them all around it, ſo that every nerve ſhould be pained by the ſeparation! tear it away, O Lord, by a hand graciouſly ſevere! and by degrees, yea, Lord by ſpeedy advances, go on, I beſeech thee, to perfect what is ſtill lacking in my faith (d)! accompliſh in me all the good pleaſure of thy goodneſs (e): Enrich me, O heavenly father, with all the graces of thy ſpirit: Form me to the compleat image of thy dear Son: And then, for his ſake, come unto me, and manifeſt thy gracious preſence in my ſoul (f), till it is ripened for that ſtate of glory, for which all theſe operations are intended to prepare it! Amen!"

CHAP.

(d) 1 Theſ. iii. 10. (e) 2 Theſ. i. 11. (f) John xiv. 21. 23.

CHAP. XIV.

A more particular view of the ſeveral Branches of the Chriſtian Temper; by which the Reader may be farther aſſiſted, in judging what he is, and what he ſhould endeavour to be *.

The importance of the caſe engages to a more particular ſurvey, what manner of ſpirit we are of: §. 1. 2. *Accordingly the Chriſtian Temper is deſcribed,* (I.) *By ſome general views of it; as a new and divine Temper,* §. 3. *As reſembling that of Chriſt,* §. 4. *And as engaging us to be ſpiritually-minded, and to walk by faith.* §. 5. *A plan of the remainder:* §. 6. *In which the Chriſtian Temper is more particularly conſidered.* (II.) *With regard to the bleſſed God; as including fear, affection, and obedience,* §. 7. *Faith and love to Chriſt,* §. 8. 9. *Joy in him,* §. 10. *And a proper Temper towards the holy ſpirit, particularly as a ſpirit of Adoption, and of Courage,* §. 11,---13. (III.) *With regard to ourſelves; as including preference of the ſoul to the body, humility, purity,* §. 14. *Temperance,* §. 15. *Contentment,* §. 16. *And Patience,* §. 17. (IV.) *With regard to our fellow-creatures; as including love,* §. 18. *Meekneſs,* §. 19. *Peaceableneſs,* §. 20. *Mercy,* §. 21. *Truth,* §. 22. *And candour in judging,* §. 23. (V.) *General qualifications of each branch:* §. 24. *Such as ſincerity,* §. 25. *Conſtancy.* §. 26. *Tenderneſs,* §. 27. *Zeal,* §. 28. *And prudence,* §. 29. *Theſe things ſhould frequently be recollected.* §. 30. *A review of all in a Scriptural Prayer.*

§. 1. When

* N. B. This Chapter is almoſt an abridgement of that excellent Book of Dr. EVANS, intitled. The Chriſtian Temper, ſo far as it relates to the deſcription of it. For particular arguments, to inforce each part of this Temper, I muſt refer the Reader to the Book itſelf.

§. 1. WHEN I conſider the infinite importance of eternity, I find it exceedingly difficult to ſatisfy myſelf in any thing which I can ſay to men, where their eternal intereſts are concerned. I have given you a view, I hope I may truly ſay, a juſt, as well as faithful view, of a truly Chriſtian Temper already. Yet for your farther aſſiſtance, I would offer it to your conſideration in various points of light, that you may be aſſiſted in judging of what you are, and of what you ought to be. And in this I aim, not only at your conviction, if you are yet a ſtranger to real religion, but at your farther edification, if by the grace of God you are by this time experimentally acquainted with it. Happy will you be, happy beyond expreſſion, if as you go on from one article to another, you can ſay, 'This is my temper and character.' Happy in no inconſiderable degree, if you can ſay, 'This is what I deſire, what I pray for, and what I purſue, in preference of every oppoſite view, tho' it be not what I have as yet attained.'

§. 2. Search then, and try, what manner of ſpirit you are of (a). And may he that ſearcheth all hearts direct the enquiry, and enable you ſo to judge yourſelf, that you may not be condemned of the Lord (b)!

§. 3. Know in the general, 'that if you are a chriſtian indeed, you have been renewed in the ſpirit of your mind (c); ſo renewed as to be regenerate, and born again.' It is not enough to have aſſumed a new name, to have been brought under ſome new reſtraints, or to have made a partial change in ſome particulars of your conduct. The change muſt be great and univerſal. Enquire then, whether you have entertained new apprehenſions of things, have formed a practical judgment different from what you formerly did; whether the ends you propoſe, the affections which you feel working in your heart, and the courſe of action to which, by thoſe affections, you are directed, be on the whole new or old *? Again, 'If you are a chriſtian indeed, you are partaker

* The reader may ſee theſe thoughts illuſtrated at large, in the three firſt of my Sermons on Regeneration.

(a) Luke ix. 53. (b) 1 Cor. xi. 31. 32. (c) Eph. iv. 23.

partaker of a divine nature (d); divine in its original, its tendency, and its reſemblance.' Enquire therefore, whether God hath implanted a principle in your heart, which tends to him, and which makes you like him.—Search your ſoul attentively, to ſee if you have really the image there of God's moral perfections, of his holineſs and righteouſneſs, his goodneſs and fidelity; for the new man is after God created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs (e), and is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him (f).

§. 4. For your farther aſſiſtance enquire, 'whether the ſame mind be in you which was alſo in Chriſt (g); whether you bear the image of God's incarnate Son, the brighteſt and faireſt reſemblance of the Father, which earth or heaven has ever beheld.' The bleſſed Jeſus deſigned himſelf to be a model for all his followers; and he is certainly a model moſt fit for our imitation; an example in our own nature, and in circumſtances adapted to general uſe; an example, recommended to us at once by its ſpotleſs perfection, and by the endearing relation in which he ſtands to us, as our maſter, our friend, and our head; as the perſon by whom our everlaſting ſtate is to be fixed, and in a reſemblance to whom our final happineſs is to conſiſt, if ever we are happy at all. Look then into the life and temper of Chriſt, as deſcribed and illuſtrated in the goſpels, and ſearch whether you can find any thing like it in your own life. Have you any thing of his devotion, love, and reſignation to God? Any thing of his humility, meekneſs, and benevolence to men? Any thing of his purity and wiſdom, his contempt of the world, his patience, his fortitude, his zeal? And indeed all the other branches of the chriſtian temper, which do not imply previous guilt in the perſon by whom they are exerciſed, may be called in to illuſtrate and aſſiſt your enquiries under this head.

§. 5. Let me add, 'If you are a chriſtian, you are in the main ſpiritually-minded, as knowing that is life and peace; whereas to be carnally-minded is death (h).'

Tho'

(d) 2 Pet. i. 4. (e) Eph. iv. 24. (f) Col. iii. 10. (g) Phil. ii. 5. (h) Rom. viii. 6.

Tho' you live in the fleſh, you will not war after it (i); you will not take your orders, and your commands from it. You will indeed attend to its neceſſary intereſts, as matter of duty; but it will ſtill be with regard to another and a nobler intereſt, that of the rational and immortal ſpirit. Your thoughts, your affections, your purſuits, your choice, will be determined by the regard to things ſpiritual, rather than carnal. In a word, 'you will walk by faith, and not by ſight (k)." Future, inviſible, and in ſome degree incomprehenſible objects, will take up your mind. Your faith will act on the being of God, his perfections, his providences, his precepts, his threatenings, and his promiſes. It will act upon Chriſt, whom having not ſeen, you will love and honour (l). It will act on that unſeen world, which it knows to be eternal, and therefore infinitely more worthy of your affectionate regard, than any of theſe things which are ſeen, and are Temporal (m).

§. 6. Theſe are general views of the chriſtian temper, on which I would intreat you to examine yourſelf: And now I would go on to lead you into a ſurvey of the grand branches of it, as relating to God, our neighbour, and ourſelves; and of thoſe qualifications, which muſt attend each of theſe branches, ſuch as ſincerity, conſtancy, tenderneſs, zeal, and prudence. And I beg your diligent attention, while I lay before you a few hints with regard to each, by which you may judge the better, both of your ſtate, and your duty.

§. 7. Examine then, I intreat you, "the temper of "your heart, with regard to the bleſſed God." Do you find there a reverential fear, and a ſupream love and veneration for his incomparable excellencies, a deſire after him as the higheſt good, and a cordial gratitude towards him as your ſupream benefactor? Can you truſt his care? Can you credit his teſtimony? Do you deſire to pay an unreſerved obedience to all that he commands, and an humble ſubmiſſion to all the diſpoſals of his providence? Do you deſign his glory as your nobleſt

[i] 2 Cor. x. 3. [k] 2 Cor. v. 7. [l] 1 Pet. i. 8.
[m] 2 Cor. iv. 18.

nobleſt end, and make it the great buſineſs of your life to approve yourſelf to him? Is it your governing care to imitate him, and to ſerve him in ſpirit and in truth (n)?

§. 8. Faith in Chriſt I have already deſcribed at large; and therefore ſhall ſay nothing farther, either of that perſuaſion of his power and grace, which is the great foundation of it; or of that acceptance of Chriſt under all his characters, or that ſurrender of the ſoul into his hands, in which its peculiar and diſtinguiſhing nature conſiſts.

§. 9. If this faith in Chriſt be ſincere, "it will un-"doubtedly produce a love to him;" which will expreſs itſelf, in affectionate thoughts of him; in ſtrict fidelity to him; in a careful obſervation of his charge; in regard to his ſpirit, to his friends, and to his intereſts; in a reverence to the memorials of his dying love, which he has inſtituted; and in an ardent deſire after that heavenly world where he dwells, and where he will at length have all his people to dwell with him (o).

§. 10. I may add, agreeably to the word of God, "that thus believing in Chriſt, and loving him, you "will alſo rejoice in him;" in his glorious deſign, and in his compleat fitneſs to accompliſh it, in the promiſes of his word, and in the privileges of his people. It will be matter of joy to you, that ſuch a Redeemer has appeared in this world of ours; and your joy for yourſelves will be proportionable to the degree of clearneſs, with which you diſcern your intereſt in him, and relation to him.

§. 11. Let me farther lead you into ſome reflections on "the temper of your heart towards the bleſ-"ſed ſpirit." If we have not the ſpirit of Chriſt, we are none of his (p). If we are not led by the ſpirit of God, we are not the children of God (q). You will then, if you are a real chriſtian, deſire that you may be filled with the ſpirit (r); that you may have every power of your

[n] John iv. 24. [o] John xvii. 24. [p] Rom. viii. 19.
[q] Rom. viii. 14. [r] Eph. v. 18.

your ſoul ſubject to his authority; that his agency on your heart be more conſtant, more operative, and more delightful. And to cheriſh theſe ſacred influences, you will often have recourſe to ſerious conſideration and meditation: You will abſtain from thoſe ſins, which tend to grieve him: You will improve the tender ſeaſons, in which he ſeems to breathe upon your ſoul: You will ſtrive earneſtly with God in prayer, that you may have him ſhed on you ſtill more abundantly thro' Jeſus Chriſt (s): And you will be deſirous to fall in with the great end of his miſſion, which was to glorify Chriſt (t), and to eſtabliſh his kingdom——"You will deſire his influences as the ſpirit of adoption," to render your acts of worſhip free and affectionate, your obedience vigorous, your ſorrow for ſin overflowing and tender, your reſignation meek, and your love ardent; in a word, to carry you thro' life and death, with the temper of a child, who delights in his father, and who longs for his more immediate preſence.

§. 12. Once more, "If you are a chriſtian indeed, "you will be deſirous to obtain the ſpirit of courage." Amidſt all that humility of ſoul to which you will be formed, you will wiſh to commence a hero in the cauſe of Chriſt, oppoſing with a vigorous reſolution the ſtrongeſt efforts of the powers of darkneſs, the inward corruption of your own heart, and all the outward difficulties you may meet with in the way of your duty, while in the cauſe and in the ſtrength of Chriſt you go on conquering and to conquer.

§. 13. All theſe things may be conſidered as branches of godlineſs; of that godlineſs, which is profitable unto all things, and hath the promiſe of the life which now is, and of that which is to come (u).

§. 14. Let me now farther lay before you ſome branches of the chriſtian temper, "which relate more "immediately to ourſelves." And here, if you are a chriſtian indeed, "you will undoubtedly prefer the ſoul to "the body, and things eternal to thoſe that are tem"poral." Conſcious of the dignity and value of your immorta

[s] Tit. iii. 6. [t] John xvi. 14. [u] 1 Tim. iv. 8.

immortal part, you will come to a firm reſolution to ſecure its happineſs, whatever is to be reſigned, whatever is to be endured in that view——If you are a real chriſtian, "you will alſo be clothed with humility (x)." You will have a deep ſenſe of your own imperfections, both natural and moral; of the ſhort extent of your knowledge; of the uncertainty and weakneſs of your reſolutions; and of your continual dependance upon God, and upon almoſt every thing about you. And eſpecially, you will be deeply ſenſible of your guilt; the remembrance of which will fill you with ſhame and confuſion, even when you have ſome reaſon to hope it is forgiven. This will forbid all haughtineſs and inſolence, in your behaviour to your fellow creatures. It will teach you, under afflictive providences, with all holy ſubmiſſion to bear the indignation of the Lord, as thoſe that know they have ſinned againſt him (y).——Again, If you are a chriſtian indeed, "you will labour after pu-"rity of ſoul," and maintain a fixed abhorrence of all prohibited ſenſual indulgence. A recollection of paſt impurities will fill you with ſhame and grief; and you will endeavour for the future to guard your thoughts and deſires, as well as your words and actions, and to abſtain, not only from the commiſſion of evil, but from the diſtant appearance and probable occaſions of it (z); as conſcious of the perfect holineſs of that God with whom you converſe, and of the purifying nature of that hope (a), which by his goſpel he hath taught you to entertain.

§. 15. With this is nearly allied "that amiable vir-"tue of temperance," which will teach you to guard againſt ſuch a uſe of meats and drinks, as indiſpoſes the body for the ſervice of the ſoul; or ſuch an indulgence in either, as will rob you of that precious jewel, your time, or occaſion an expence beyond what your circumſtances will admit, and beyond what will conſiſt with thoſe liberalities to the poor which your relation and theirs to God and each other will require. In ſhort, you will guard againſt what has a tendency to increaſe a ſen-

(x) 1 Pet. v. 5. (y) Micah vii. 9. (z) 1. Theſſ. v. 22. (a) 1 John iii. 3.

ſual diſpoſition; againſt whatever would alienate the ſoul from communion with God, and would diminiſh its zeal and activity in his ſervice.

§. 16. The divine philoſophy of the Bleſſed Jeſus will alſo teach you "a contented temper." It will moderate your deſires of thoſe worldly enjoyments, after which many feel ſuch an inſatiable thirſt, ever growing with indulgence and exceſs. You will guard againſt an immoderate care about thoſe things, which would lead you into a forgetfulneſs of your heavenly inheritance. If providence diſappoint your undertakings, you will ſubmit. If others be more proſperous, you will not envy them; but rather will be thankful for what God is pleaſed to beſtow upon them, as well as for what he gives you. No unlawful methods will be uſed, to alter your preſent condition; and whatever it is, you will endeavour to make the beſt of it; remembring, it is what infinite wiſdom and goodneſs have appointed you, and that it is beyond all compariſon better than you have deſerved; yea, that the very deficiencies and inconveniencies of it may conduce to the improvement of your future and compleat happineſs.

§. 17. With contentment, if you are a diſciple of Chriſt, 'you will join patience too,' and in patience will poſſeſs your ſouls (b). You cannot indeed be quite inſenſible, either of afflictions, or of injuries; but your mind will be calm and compoſed under them, and ſteady in the proſecution of proper duty, tho' afflictions preſs, and tho' your hopes, your deareſt hopes, and proſpects be delayed. Patience will prevent raſh and haſty concluſions, and fortify you againſt ſeeking irregular methods of relief; diſpoſing you in the mean time, till God ſhall be pleaſed to appear for you, to go on ſteadily in the way of your duty; committing yourſelf to him in well doing (c). You will alſo be careful, that patience may have its perfect work (d), and prevail in proportion to thoſe circumſtances which demand its peculiar exerciſe. For inſtance, when the ſucceſſions of evil are long and various, ſo that deep calls to deep, and all God's

(b) Luke xxi. 19. (c) 1 Pet. iv. 17. (d) Jam. i. 4

God's waves and billows ſeem to be going over you one after another (e); when God touches you in the moſt tender part; when the reaſons of his conduct to you are quite unaccountable; when your natural ſpirits are weak and decayed; when unlawful methods of redreſs ſeem near and eaſy; ſtill your reverence for the will of your heavenly Father will carry it againſt all, and keep you waiting quietly for deliverance in his own time and way.

N. B. *If this chapter ſeem too long to be read at once, it may be properly divided here.*

§. 18. I have thus led you into a brief review of the chriſtian temper, with reſpect to God, and ourſelves: Permit me now to add, 'that the goſpel will teach you another ſet of very important leſſons with reſpect to your fellow-creatures.' They are all ſummed up in this, 'Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf (f); and whatſoever thou wouldſt (that is, whatſoever thou couldſt in an exchange of circumſtances fairly and reaſonably deſire,) that others ſhould do unto thee, do thou likewiſe the ſame unto them (g).' The religion of the bleſſed Jeſus, when it triumphs in your ſoul, will conquer the predominancy of an irregular ſelf-love, and will teach you candidly and tenderly to look upon your neighbour as another ſelf. As you are ſenſible of your own rights, you will be ſenſible of his; as you ſupport your own character, you will ſupport his. You will deſire his welfare, and be ready to relieve his neceſſity, as you would have your own conſulted by another. You will put the kindeſt conſtruction upon his dubious words and actions. You will take pleaſure in his happineſs, you will feel his diſtreſs, in ſome meaſure as your own. And moſt happy will you be, when this obvious rule is familiar to your mind, when this golden law is written upon your heart; and when it is habitually and impartially conſulted by you, upon every occaſion, whether great or ſmall.

(e) Pſal. xii. 7. (f) Rom. xiii. 9. (g) Mat. vii. 12.

§. 19. The goſpel will alſo teach you, 'to put on 'meekneſs (h),' not only with reſpect to God, ſubmitting to the authority of his word, and the diſpoſal of his providence, as was urged before; but alſo with regard to your brethren of mankind. Its gentle inſtructions will form you to calmneſs of temper under injuries and provocations, ſo that you may not be angry without or beyond juſt cauſe. It will engage you to guard your words, leſt you provoke and exaſperate thoſe you ſhould rather ſtudy by love to gain, and by tenderneſs to heal. Meekneſs will render you ſlow in uſing any rough and violent methods, if they can by any means be lawfully avoided; and ready to admit, and even to propoſe a reconciliation, after they have been entered into, if there may yet be hope of ſucceeding. So far as this branch of the chriſtian temper prevails in your heart, you will take care to avoid every thing, which might give unneceſſary offence to others; you will behave yourſelf in a modeſt manner, according to your ſtations; and it will work, both with regard to ſuperiors and inferiors; teaching you duly to honour the one, and not to overbear or oppreſs, to grieve or inſult the other. And in religion itſelf, it will reſtrain all immediate ſallies and hard cenſures; and will command down that wrath of man; which inſtead of working, ſo often oppoſes the righteouſneſs of God (i), and ſhames and wounds that good cauſe, in which it is boiſterouſly and furiouſly engaged.

§. 20 With this is naturally connected 'a peaceful 'diſpoſition.' If you are a chriſtian indeed, you will have ſuch a value and eſteem for peace, as to endeavour to obtain and to preſerve it, as much as lieth in you (k), as much as you fairly and honourably can.—This will have ſuch an influence upon your conduct, as to make you, not only cautious of giving offence, and ſlow in taking it, but earneſtly deſirous to regain peace as ſoon as may be, when it is in any meaſure broken; that the wound may be healed, while it is green, and before it begins to rankle and feſter. And more eſpecially

(h) Col. iii. 12. (i) Jam. i. 20. (k) Rom. xii. 18.

cially this diſpoſition will engage you, to keep the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace (l), with all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt (m); whom if you truly love, you will alſo love all thoſe, whom you have reaſon to believe to be his diſciples and ſervants.

§. 21. If you be yourſelves indeed of that number, "you will alſo put on bowels of mercy (n)." The mercies of God, and thoſe of that bleſſed Redemer, will work on your heart, to mould it to ſentiments of compaſſion and generoſity, ſo that you will feel the wants and ſorrows of others; you will deſire to relieve their neceſſities, and, as you have opportunity, you will do good, both to their bodies and their ſouls; expreſſing your kind affections in ſuitable actions, which may both evidence their ſincerity, and render them effectual.

§. 22. As a chriſtian, "you will alſo maintain truth "inviolable," not only in your ſolemn teſtimonies, when confirmed by an oath, but likewiſe in common converſation. You will remember too, that your promiſes bring an obligation upon you, which you are by no means at liberty to break thro'. On the whole, you will be careful to keep a ſtrict correſpondence between your words and your actions, in ſuch a manner as becomes a ſervant of the God of truth.

§. 23. Once more, as amidſt the ſtricteſt care to obſerve all the divine precepts, you will ſtill find many imperfections, on account of which you will be obliged to pray, that God would not enter into ſtrict judgment with you, as well knowing that in his ſight you cannot be juſtified (o); "you will be careful not to judge others, in ſuch a manner as ſhould awaken the ſeverity of his judgment againſt yourſelf (p). You will not, therefore, judge them pragmatically, that is, when you have nothing to do with their actions; nor raſhly, without enquiring into circumſtances; nor partially, without weighing them attentively and fairly; nor uncharitably, putting the worſt conſtruction upon things in their own

[l] Eph. iv. 3. [m] 1 Cor. i. 2. [n] Col. iii. 12.
(o) Pſalm cxliii. 2. (p) Mat. vii. 1, 2.

nature dubious, deciding upon intentions as evil farther than they appear certainly to be ſo, pronouncing on the ſtate of men, or on the whole of their character, from any particular action, and involving the innocent with the guilty. There is a moderation contrary to all theſe extreams, which the goſpel recommends; and if you receive the goſpel in good earneſt into your heart, it will lay the ax to the root of ſuch evils as theſe.

§. 24. Having thus briefly illuſtrated the principal branches of the chriſtian temper and character, I ſhall conclude the repreſentation, with reminding you of "ſome general qualifications, which muſt be mingled with all, and give a tincture to each of them; ſuch as ſincerity, tenderneſs, zeal, and prudence."

§. 25. Always remember, "that ſincerity is the very ſoul of true religion." A ſingle intention to pleaſe God, and to approve yourſelves to him, muſt animate and govern all that we do in it. Under the influence of this principle, you will impartially enquire into every intimation of duty, and apply to the practice of it ſo far as it is known to you. Your conduct in private and in ſecret, will be agreable to your moſt public behaviour. A ſenſe of the divine authority will teach you, to eſteem all God's precepts concerning all things to be right, and to hate every falſe way (q).

§. 26. Thus are you in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity to have your converſation in the world (r). And "you are alſo to charge it upon your ſoul, to be ſtedfaſt and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord (s)." There muſt not only be ſome ſudden fits and ſtarts of devotion, or of ſomething which looks like it; but religion muſt be an habitual and permanent thing. There muſt be a purpoſe to adhere to it at all times. It muſt be made the ſtated and ordinary buſineſs of life. Deliberate and preſumptuous ſins muſt be carefully avoided; a guard muſt be maintained againſt the common infirmities of life; and falls of one kind or of another muſt be matter of proportionable humiliation before God, and muſt occaſion renewed reſolution

(q) Pſal. cxix. 128. (r) 2 Cor. i. 12. [s] 1 Cor. xv. 58.

tion for his ſervice. And thus you are to go on to the end of your life, not diſcouraged by the length and difficulty of the way, nor allured on the one hand, or terrified on the other, by all the various temptations which may ſurround and aſſault you. Your ſoul muſt be fixed on this baſis, and you are ſtill to behave yourſelf as one who knows he ſerves an unchangeable God, and who expects from him a kingdom which cannot be moved (t).

§. 27. Again, ſo far as the goſpel prevails in your heart, "your ſpirit will be tender, and the ſtone will be transformed into fleſh." You will deſire, that your apprehenſion of divine things may be quick, your affections ready to take proper impreſſions, your conſcience always eaſily touched, and, on the whole, your reſolutions pliant to the divine authority, and cordially willing to be, and to do, whatever God ſhall appoint. You will have a tender regard to the word of God, a tender caution againſt ſin, a tender guard againſt the ſnares of proſperity, a tender ſubmiſſion to God's afflicting hand: In a word, you will be tender, wherever the divine honour is concerned; and careful, neither to do any thing yourſelf, nor to allow any thing in another, ſo far as you can influence, by which God ſhould be offended, or religion reproached.

§. 28. Nay more than all this, you will, ſo far as true chriſtianity governs in your mind, "exert an holy zeal in the ſervice of our Redeemer and your Father." You will be zealouſly affected in every good thing (u), in proportion to its apprehended goodneſs and importance. You will be zealous eſpecially, to correct what is irregular in yourſelves, and to act to the utmoſt of your ability for the cauſe of God. Nor will you be able to look with an indifferent eye on the conduct of others in this view? But ſo far as charity, meekneſs and prudence will admit, you will teſtify your diſapprobation of every thing in it, which is diſhonourable to God, and injurious to men. And you will labour not only to reclaim men from ſuch courſes, but to engage them to religion, and to quicken them in it. §. 29.

[t] Heb. xii. 28. (u) Gal. iv. 18.

§. 29. And once more, You will desire "to use the "prudence which God hath given you," in judging what is, in present circumstances, your duty to God, your neighbour, and yourself; What will be, on the whole, the most acceptable manner of discharging it, and how far it may be most advantageously pursued; as remembring, that he is indeed the wisest and the happiest man, who by constant attention of thought discovers the greatest opportunities of doing good, and with ardent and animated resolution breaks thro' every opposition, that he may improve those opportunities.

§. 30. This is such a view of the christian temper as could conveniently be thrown within such narrow limits; and I hope, it may assist many in the great and important work of self-examination. Let your own conscience answer, how far you have already attained it, and how far you desire it; and let the principal topics here touched upon be fixed in your memory and in your heart, that you may be mentioning them before God in your daily addresses to the throne of grace, in order to receive from him all necessary assistances for bringing them into practice.

A Prayer, *chiefly in the Scripture language, in which the several branches of the* Christian Temper *are more briefly enumerated, in the order laid down above.*

"BLESSED God, I humbly adore thee, as the great father of lights, and the giver of every good and every perfect gift (x). From thee therefore I seek every blessing, and especially those, which lead me to thyself, and prepare me for the eternal enjoyment of thee. I adore thee, as the God, who searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men (y). Search me, O God, and know my heart: Try me, and know my thoughts: See if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (z). May I know what manner of spirit I am of (a), and be preserved from mistaking, where the error might be infinitely fatal!

"May

(x) Jam. i. 17. [y] Jer. xvii. 10. (z) Psal. cxxxix. 23. 24. (a) Luke ix. 55.

" May I, O Lord, be renewed in the ſpirit of my mind (b)! a new heart do thou give me, and a new ſpirit do thou put within me (c)! make me partaker of a divine nature (d); and as he who hath called me is holy, may I be holy in all manner of converſation (e)! may the ſame mind be in me which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus (f); may I ſo walk even as he walked (g)! deliver me from being carnally-minded, which is death; and make me ſpiritually-minded, ſince that is life and peace (h)! and may I, while I paſs thro' this world of ſenſe, walk by faith, and not by ſight (i); and be ſtrong in faith, giving glory to God (k)!

" May thy grace, O Lord, which hath appeared unto all men, and appeared to me, with ſuch glorious evidence and luſtre, effectually teach me to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly (l)! work in mine heart that godlineſs which is profitable unto all things (m); and teach me, by the influences of thy bleſſed ſpirit, to love thee the Lord my God, with all my heart, and with all my ſoul, and with all my mind, and with all my ſtrength (n)! may I yield myſelf unto thee, as alive from the dead (o); and preſent my body a living ſacrifice, holy, and acceptable in thy ſight, which is my moſt reaſonable ſervice (p)! may I entertain the moſt faithful and affectionate regards to the bleſſed Jeſus, thine incarnate ſon, the brightneſs of thy glory and the expreſs image of thy perſon (q)! tho' I have not ſeen him may I love him; and in him, tho' now I ſee him not, yet believing may I rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory (r): And may the life which I live in the fleſh, be daily by the faith of the ſon of God (s)! may I be filled with the ſpirit (t); and may I be led by it (u); and ſo may it be evident to others, and eſpecially to my own ſoul, that I am a child of God, and an heir of glory! may I not receive the ſpirit of bondage unto fear, but the ſpirit of adoption, whereby I may be enabled to cry Abba, Father

(b) Eph. iv. 23. (c) Ezek. xxxvi. 26. (d) 2 Pet. i. 4. (e) 1 Pet. i. 15. [f] Phil. ii. 5. (g) 1 John ii. 6. [h] Rom. viii. 6. (i) 2 Cor. v 7. [k] Rom. iv. 20. [l] Tit. ii. 11, 12. [m] 1 Tim. iv. 8. [n] Mark xii. 3. [o] Rom. vi. 13. [p] Rom. xii. 1. (q) Heb. i. 3. (r) 1 Pet. i. 8. [s] Gal. ii. 20. (t) Eph. v. 18. [u] Rom. viii. 14.

Father (x)! may he work in me, as the ſpirit of love, and of power, and of a ſound mind (y); that I may add to my faith, virtue (z)! may I be ſtrong, and very couragious (a), and quit myſelf like a man (b), and like a chriſtian in the work to which I am called, and in that warfare, which I had in view, when I liſted under the banner of the great Captain of my ſalvation!

"Teach me, O Lord, ſeriouſly to conſider the nature of my own ſoul, and ſo ſet a ſuitable value upon it! may I labour not only, or chiefly, for the meat that periſheth, but for that which endureth to eternal life (c)! may I humble myſelf under thy mighty hand, and be clothed with humility (d); decked with the ornament of a meek and quiet ſpirit, which in the ſight of God is of great price (e)! May I be pure in heart, that I may ſee God (f); mortifying my members which are on the earth (g), ſo that if a right eye offend me, I may pluck it out, and if a right hand offend me, I may cut it off (h)! may I be temperate in all things (i), content with ſuch things as I have (k), and inſtructed to be ſo in whatſoever ſtate I am (l)! may patience alſo have its perfect work in me, that I may be in that reſpect compleat and wanting nothing (m)!

"Form me, O Lord, I beſeech thee, to a proper temper toward my fellow-creatures! may I love my neighbour as myſelf (n); and whatſoever I would that others ſhould do unto me, may I alſo do the ſame unto them (o)! may I put on meekneſs (p) under the greateſt injuries and provocations; and if it be poſſible, as much as lieth in me, may I live peaceably with all men (q)! may I be merciful, as my father in heaven is merciful (r)! may I ſpeak the truth from my heart (s); and may ſpeak it in love (t); guarding againſt every inſtance of a cenſorious and malignant diſpoſition; and taking care not to judge ſeverely, as I would not be judged (u) with a ſeverity, which

[x] Rom. viii. 15. (y) 2 Tim. i. 17. [z] 2 Pet. i. 5. [a] Joſh. i. 7. [b] i. Cor. xvi. 13. (c) John vi. 27. [d] 1 Pet. v. 5. 6. (e) 1 Pet. iii. 4. [f] Mat. v. 8. [g] Col. iii. 5. [h] Mat. v. 29. 30. (i) 1 Cor. ix. 25. [k] Heb. xiii. 5. (l) Phil. iv. 11. (m) Jam. i. 4. (n) Gal. v. 14 [o] Mat. 7. 12. [p] Col. iii. 12. [q] Rom. xii. 18. [r] Luke. vi. 36. [s] Pſal. xv. 2. [t] Eph. iv. 15. [u] Mat. vii. 1.

which thou, Lord, knoweſt, and which mine own conſcience knows, I ſhould not be able to ſupport!

"I intreat thee, O Lord, to work in me all thoſe qualifications of the chriſtian temper, which may render it peculiarly acceptable to thee, and may prove ornamental to my profeſſion in the world. Renew I beſeech thee, a right ſpirit within me (x); make me an Iſraelite indeed, in whom there is no allowed guile (y)! and while I feaſt on Chriſt, as my paſſover ſacrificed for me, may I keep the feaſt with the unleavened bread of ſincerity and truth (z)! make me, I beſeech thee, O thou Almighty, and unchangeable God, ſtedfaſt and immovable, always abounding in thy work, as knowing that my labour in the Lord ſhall not be finally in vain (a)! may my heart be tender (b), eaſily impreſſed with thy word and providences, touched with an affectionate concern for thy glory, and ſenſible of every impulſe of thy ſpirit! may I be zealous for my God (c), with a zeal according to knowledge (d) and charity (e); and teach me in thy ſervice, to join the wiſdom of the ſerpent (f), with the boldneſs of the Lion, and the innocence of the dove! thus render me, by thy grace, a ſhining image of my dear redeemer; and at length bring me to wear the bright reſemblance of his holineſs and his glory in that world where he dwells; that I may aſcribe everlaſting honours to him, and to thee, O thou father of mercies, whoſe invaluable gift he is, and to thine holy ſpirit, thro' whoſe gracious influences I would humbly hope, I may call thee my father, and Jeſus my ſaviour! *Amen.*"

CHAP

(x) Pſal. li. 10. (y) John i. 47. (z) 1 Cor. v. 7. 8. (a) 1 Cor. xv. 58. (b) 2 Kings xxii. 19. (c) Num xxv. 13. (d) Rom. x. 2. (e) 1 Cor. xvi. 14. (f) Mat. x. 16.

CHAP. XV.

The reader reminded how much he needs the aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God, to form the Temper deſcribed above, and what encouragement he has to expect it.

Forward reſolutions may prove ineffectual: §. 1. *Yet religion is not to be given up in deſpair, but divine grace ſought.* §. 2. *A general view of its reality and neceſſity, from reaſon,* §. 3. *and ſcripture.* §. 4. *The ſpirit to be ſought, as the ſpirit of Chriſt,* §. 5. *And in that view, the great ſtrength of the ſoul.* §. 6. *The encouragement there is to hope for the communication of it.* §. 7. *A concluding exhortation to pray for it:* §. 8. *And an humble addreſs to God, purſuant to that exhortation.*

§. 1. I Have now laid before you a plan of that temper and character, which the goſpel requires, and which, if you are a true chriſtian, you will deſire and purſue. Surely there is in the very deſcription of it ſomething which muſt powerfully ſtrike every mind, which has any taſte for what is truly beautiful and excellent. And I queſtion not, but you, my dear reader, will feel ſome impreſſion of it upon your heart. You will immediately form ſome lively purpoſe of endeavouring after it; and perhaps you may imagine, you ſhall certainly and quickly attain to it. You ſee how reaſonable it is, and what deſirable conſequences neceſſarily attend it, and the aſpect which it bears on your preſent enjoyment and your future happineſs; and therefore are determined, you will act accordingly. But give me leave ſeriouſly to remind you, how many there have been, (would to God that ſeveral of the inſtances had not happened within the compaſs of my own perſonal obſervation! whoſe goodneſs hath been like a morning cloud, and

and the early dew which ſoon paſſeth away (a). There is not room indeed abſolutely to apply the words of Joſhua, taken in the moſt rigorous ſenſe, when he ſaid to Iſrael (that he might humble their too haſty and ſanguine reſolutions,) Ye cannot ſerve the Lord (b). But I will venture to ſay, you cannot eaſily do it. Alas, you know not the difficulties you have to break thro'; you know not the temptations, which Satan will throw in your way; you know not how importunate your vain and ſinful companions will be, to draw you back into the ſnare you may attempt to break; and above all, you know not the ſubtile artifices, which your own corruptions will practiſe upon you, in order to recover their dominion over you. You think the views you now have of things will be laſting; becauſe the principles and objects to which they refer are ſo: But perhaps to-morrow may undeceive you, or rather deceive you anew. To-morrow may preſent ſome triſle in a new dreſs, which ſhall amuſe you into a forgetfulneſs of all this. Nay, perhaps, before you lie down on your bed, the impreſſions you now feel may wear off. The corrupt deſires of your own heart, now perhaps a little charmed down, and lying as if they were dead, may ſpring up again with new violence, as if they had ſlept only to recruit their vigour; and if you are not ſupported by a better ſtrength than your own, this ſtruggle for liberty will only make your future chains the heavier, the more ſhameful, and the more fatal.

§. 2. What then is to be done? Is the convinced ſinner to lie down in deſpair? to ſay, 'I am a helpleſs captive, and by exerting myſelf with violence, may break my limbs ſooner than my bonds, and increaſe the evil I would remove.' God forbid! you cannot, I am perſuaded, be ſo little acquainted with chriſtianity, as not to know, 'that the doctrine of divine aſſiſtances bears a very conſiderable part in it.' You have often, I doubt not, read of the law of the ſpirit of life in Chriſt Jeſus, as making us free from the law of ſin and death (c); and have

(a) Hoſ. vi. 4. [b] Joſh. xxiv. 19. [c] Rom. viii. 2.

been told that thro' the ſpirit we mortify the deeds of body (d): You have read of doing all things thro' Chriſt who ſtrengtheneth us (e); whoſe grace is ſufficient for us, and whoſe ſtrength is made perfect in weakneſs (f). Permit me, therefore, now to call down your attention to this, as a truth of the cleareſt evidence, and the utmoſt importance.

§. 3. Reaſon indeed, as well as the whole tenor of ſcripture, agrees with this. * The whole created world has a neceſſary dependance on God: From him even the knowledge of natural things is derived (g), and ſkill in them is to be aſcribed to him (h). Much more loudly does ſo great and excellent a work, as the new-forming the human mind, beſpeak its divine author. When you conſider, how various the branches of the chriſtian temper are, and how contrary many of them alſo are to that temper, which hath prevailed in your heart, and governed your life in time paſt; you muſt really ſee divine influences as neceſſary to produce and nouriſh them, as the influences of the ſun and rain are to call up the variety of plants, and flowers, and grains and fruits, by which the earth is adorned, and our life ſupported. You will yet be more ſenſible of this, if you reflect on the violent oppoſition which this happy work muſt expect to meet with, of which I ſhall preſently warn you more largely, and which if you have not already experienced, it muſt be becauſe you have but very lately begun to think of religion.

§. 4. Accordingly, if you give yourſelf leave to conſult ſcripture on this head, (and if you would live like a chriſtian you muſt be conſulting it every day and forming your notions and actions by it;) you will ſee, that the whole tenor of it teaches that dependance upon God, which I am now recommending. You will particularly ſee, that the production of religion in the ſoul is matter of divine promiſe; that when it has been effected, ſcripture

[d] Rom. viii. 13. (e) Phil. iv. 13. (f) 2 Cor. xii. 9. (g) Pſal. xciv. 10. (h) Ex. xxxi 3.—6.

* See many of theſe thoughts much more largely illuſtrated in my VIIth Sermon on Regeneration.

ture aſcribes it to a divine agency; and that the increaſe of grace and piety in the heart of thoſe who are truly regenerate, is alſo ſpoken of as the Work of God, who begins and carries it on until the day of Jeſus Chriſt (i).

§. 5. In conſequence of all theſe views, lay it down to yourſelf as a moſt certain principle, 'that no attempt in religion is to be made in your own ſtrength.' If you forget this, and God purpoſes finally to ſave you, he will humble you by repeated diſappointments, till he teach you better. You will be aſhamed of one ſcheme and effort, and of another, till you ſettle upon the true baſis. He will alſo probably ſhew you, not only in the general, that your ſtrength is to be derived from heaven; but particularly, that it is the office of the bleſſed ſpirit, to purify the heart, and to invigorate holy reſolutions; and alſo, that in all theſe operations he is to be conſidered as the ſpirit of Chriſt, working under his direction, and as a vital communication from him, under the character of the great head of the church, the grand treaſurer and diſpenſer of theſe holy and beneficial influences. On which account it is called the ſupply of the ſpirit of Jeſus Chriſt (k), who is exalted at the right hand of the father, to give repentance and remiſſion of ſins (l); in whoſe grace alone we can be ſtrong (m), and of whoſe fulneſs we receive, even grace for grace (n).

§. 6. Reſolve therefore ſtrenuouſly for the ſervice of God, and for the care of your ſoul; but 'reſolve modeſtly and humbly.' Even the youths ſhall faint and be weary, and the young men utterly fall; but they who wait on the Lord, are the perſons who renew their ſtrength (o). When a ſoul is almoſt afraid to declare in the preſence of the Lord, that it will not do this, or that, which has formerly offended him; when it is afraid abſolutely to promiſe, that it will perform this, or that duty, with vigour and conſtancy; but only expreſſes its humble earneſt deſire, that it may by grace be enabled to avoid the one, or purſue the other; then ſo far as my obſervation

(i) Phil. i. 10. [k] Phil. i. 10. [l] Acts v. 31. [m] 2 Tim. ii. 1. [n] John i. 16. (o) Iſa. xl. 30, 31.

ſervation or experience have reached, it is in the beſt way to learn the happy art of conquering temptations, and of diſcharging duty.

§. 7. On the other hand, let not your dependance upon this ſpirit, and your ſenſe of your own weakneſs and inſufficiency for any thing ſpiritually good without his continued aid, diſcourage you from devoting yourſelf to God, and engaging in a religious life, conſidering "what abundant reaſon you have to hope, that theſe gracious influences will be communicated to you." The light of nature, at the ſame time that it teaches the need we have of help from God in a virtuous courſe, may lead us to conclude, that ſo benevolent a being, who beſtows on the moſt unworthy and careleſs part of mankind ſo many bleſſings, will take a peculiar pleaſure in communicating to ſuch as humbly aſk them, thoſe gracious aſſiſtances, which may form their deathleſs ſouls into his own reſemblance, and fit them for that happineſs to which their rational nature is ſuited, and for which it was in its firſt conſtitution intended. The word of God will much more abundantly confirm ſuch an hope. You there hear divine wiſdom crying, even to thoſe who had long trifled with her inſtructions, turn ye at my reproof, and I would pour out my ſpirit upon you (p). You hear the Apoſtle ſaying, let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need (q). Yea, you there hear our Lord himſelf urging in this ſweet and convincing manner; if ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more ſhall your heavenly father give his holy ſpirit unto them that aſk him (r)? This gift and promiſe of the ſpirit was given unto Chriſt, when he aſcended up on high, in truſt for all his true diſciples. God hath ſhed it abroad abundantly upon us in him (s). And I may add, that the very deſire you feel after the farther communication of the ſpirit, is the reſult of the firſt fruits of it already given: So that you may with peculiar propriety interpret it as a ſpecial call, to open your mouth wide,

[p] Prov. i. 23. [q] Heb. iv. 16. [r] Luke xi. 13. [s] Tit. iii. 6.

wide, that he may fill it (t). You thirſt, and therefore you may chearfully plead, that Jeſus hath invited you to come unto him and drink; with a promiſe, not only that you ſhall drink if you come unto him, but alſo that out of your belly ſhall flow, as it were, rivers of living water for the edification and refreſhment of others (u).

§. 8. Go forth therefore, with humble chearfulneſs, to the proſecution of all the duties of the chriſtian life. Go, and proſper, in the ſtrength of the Lord, making mention of his righteouſneſs, and of his only (x). And as a token of farther communications, may your heart be quickened to the moſt earneſt deſires, after the bleſſings I have now been recommending to your purſuit! may you be ſtirred up to pour out your ſoul before God, in ſuch holy breathings as theſe! and may they be your daily language in his gracious preſence!

An humble Supplication *for the Influences of* Divine Grace, *to form and ſtrengthen Religion in the Soul.*

"BLESSED God! I ſincerely acknowledge before thee mine own weakneſs and inſufficiency for any thing that is ſpiritually good. I have experienced it a thouſand times; and yet my fooliſh heart would again truſt itſelf (y), and form reſolutions in its own ſtrength. But let this be the firſt-fruits of thy gracious influence upon it, to bring it to an humble diſtruſt of itſelf, and to a repoſe on thee!

"Abundantly do I rejoice, O Lord, in the kind aſſurances which thou giveſt me, of thy readineſs to beſtow liberally and richly ſo great a benefit. I do therefore, according to thy condeſcending invitation, come with boldneſs to the throne of grace, that I may find grace to help in every time of need (z). I mean not, O Lord God, to turn thy grace into wantonneſs or perverſeneſs (a), or to make my weakneſs an excuſe for negligence and ſloth. I confeſs, thou haſt already given me more ſtrength than I have uſed; and I charge it upon

[t] Pſal. lxxxi. 10. [u] John vii. 37. 38. [x] Pſal. lxxi. 16. (y) Prov. xxviii. 26. (z) Heb. iv. 16. [a] Jude ver. 4.

myſelf, and not on thee, that I have not long ſince received ſtill more abundant ſupplies. I deſire for the future to be found diligent in the uſe of all appointed means; in the neglect of which, I well know, that petitions like theſe would be a profane mockery, and might much more probably provoke thee to take away what I have, than prevail upon thee to impart more. But firmly reſolving to exert myſelf to the utmoſt, I earneſtly intreat the communications of thy grace, that I may be enabled to fulfill that reſolution.

" Be ſurety, O Lord, unto thy ſervant, for good (b)! Be pleaſed to ſhed abroad thy ſanctifying influences on my ſoul, to form me for every duty thou requireſt! Implant, I beſeech thee, every grace and virtue deep in mine heart; and maintain the happy temper in the midſt of thoſe aſſaults, from within and from without, to which I am continually liable, while I am ſtill in this world, and carry about with me ſo many infirmities! Fill my breaſt, I beſeech thee, with good affections, towards thee, my God, and my fellow-creatures! Remind me always of thy preſence; and may I remember, that every ſecret ſentiment of my ſoul is open to thee! May I therefore guard againſt the firſt riſings of ſin, and the firſt approaches to it! and that Satan may not find room for his evil ſuggeſtions, I earneſtly beg, thou, Lord, wouldſt fill my heart by thine holy ſpirit, and take up thy reſidence there! Dwell in me, and walk with me (c); and let my body be the temple of the Holy Ghoſt (d)!

" May I be ſo joined to Chriſt Jeſus my Lord, as to be one ſpirit with him (e), and feel his invigorating influences continually bearing me on, ſuperior to every temptation, and to every corruption! That while the youths ſhall faint and be weary, and the young men utterly fall, I may ſo wait upon the Lord, as to renew my ſtrength (f); and may go on from one degree of faith, and love, and zeal, and holineſs, to another, till I appear perfect before thee in Zion, (g), to drink in immortal

(b) Pſal. cxix. 122. (c) 2 Cor. vi. 16. (d) 1 Cor. vi. 19.
(e) 1 Cor. vi. 17. (f) Iſa. xl. 30, 31. (g) Pſ. lxxxiv. 7.

mortal vigour and joy, from thee, as the everlaſting fountain of both, thro Jeſus Chriſt my Lord, in whom I have righteouſneſs and ſtrength (h), and to whom I deſire ever to aſcribe the praiſe of all mine improvements in both! Amen.

(h) Iſai. xlv. 24.

CHAP. XVI.

The Chriſtian Convert warned of, and animated againſt, thoſe Diſcouragements which he muſt expect to meet with, when entering on a religious Courſe.

Chriſt has inſtructed his Diſciples to expect oppoſition and difficulties in the way to heaven. §. 1. *Therefore,* [I.] *A more particular view of them is taken, as ariſing,* (1.) *From the remainders of indwelling ſin.* §. 2. (2,) *From the world, and eſpecially from former ſinful companions.* §. 3. (3.) *From the temptations and ſuggeſtions of Satan.* §. 4. [II.] *The chriſtian is animated and encouraged by various conſiderations to oppoſe them; particularly, by the preſence of God, the aids of Chriſt, the example of others, who, tho' feeble, have conquered, and the crown of glory to be expected.* § 5, 6. *Therefore, tho' apoſtacy would be infinitely fatal, the chriſtian may puſh on cheerfully.* §. 7. *Accordingly the ſoul, alarmed by theſe views, is repreſented as committing itſelf to God, in the prayer which concludes the chapter.*

§. 1. WITH the utmoſt propriety has our divine maſter required us, to ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait gate (a); thereby (as it ſeems) intimating, not only that the paſſage is narrow, but that it is beſet with enemies; beſet on the right hand, and on the left, with enemies cunning and formidable. And be aſſured,

O

(a) Luke xiii. 23.

O reader, that whatever your circumſtances in life are, you muſt meet and encounter them. It will therefore be your prudence, to ſurvey them attentively in your own reflections, that you may ſee what you are to expect; and may conſider in what armour it is neceſſary you ſhould be clothed, and with what weapons you muſt be furniſhed to manage the combat. You have often heard them marſhalled, as it were, under three great leaders, the fleſh, the world, and the devil; and according to this diſtribution, I would call you to conſider the the forces of each, as ſetting themſelves in array againſt you. Oh that you may be excited to take to yourſelf the whole armour of God, (b), and to acquit yourſelf like a man (c), and a chriſtian!

§. 2. Let your conſcience anſwer, whether you do not carry about with you a corrupt, and degenerate nature? You will, I doubt not, feel its effects. You will feel, in the language of the Apoſtle, (who ſpeaks of it as the caſe of chriſtians themſelves,) the fleſh luſting againſt the ſpirit, ſo that you will not be able, in all inſtances, to do the things that you would (d). You brought irregular propenſities into the world along with you; and you have ſo often indulged thoſe ſinful inclinations, that you have greatly increaſed their ſtrength; and you will find in conſequence of it, that theſe habits cannot be broke thro' without great difficulty. You will, no doubt, often recollect, the ſtrong figures, in which the Prophet deſcribes a caſe like yours; and you will own, that it is juſtly repreſented by that of an Ethiopian changing his ſkin, and the Leopard his ſpots (e). It is indeed poſſible, that you may find ſuch an edge and eagerneſs upon your ſpirits, as may lead you to imagine that all oppoſition will immediately fall before you. But alas, I fear, that in a little time theſe enemies which ſeemed to be ſlain at your feet, will revive, and recover their weapons, and renew the aſſault in one form or another. And perhaps your moſt painful combats may be with ſuch as you had thought moſt eaſy to be vanquiſhed,

(b) Eph. vi. 13. (c) 1 Cor. xvi. 13. (d) Gal. v. 17.
(e) Jer. xiii. 23.

quiſhed, and your greateſt danger may ariſe from ſome of thoſe enemies from whom you apprehended the leaſt; particularly from pride, and from indolence of ſpirit; from a ſecret alienation of heart from God, and from an indiſpoſition for converſing with him, thro' an immoderate attachment to things ſeen and temporal, which may be oftentimes exceeding dangerous to your ſalvation, tho' perhaps they be not abſolutely and univerſally prohibited. In a thouſand of theſe inſtances, you muſt learn to deny yourſelf, or you cannot be Chriſt's diſciple (f).

§. 3. You muſt alſo lay your account, to find great difficulties from the world; from its manners, cuſtoms, and examples. The things of the world will hinder you one way, and the men of the world another. Perhaps you may meet with much leſs aſſiſtance in religion, than you are now ready to expect from good men. The preſent generation of them is generally ſo cautious to avoid every thing that looks like oſtentation, and there ſeems ſomething ſo inſupportably dreadful in the charge of enthuſiaſm, that you will find moſt of your chriſtian brethren ſtudying to conceal their virtue and their piety, much more than others ſtudy to conceal their vice and their prophaneneſs. But while, unleſs your ſituation be ſingularly happy, you meet with very little aid one way, you will, no doubt, find great oppoſition another. The enemies of religion will be bold and active in their aſſaults, while many of its friends ſeem unconcerned: And one ſinner will probably exert himſelf more to corrupt you, than ten chriſtians to ſecure and ſave you. They, who have once been your companions in ſin, will try a thouſand artful methods to allure you back again to their forſaken ſociety: Some of them, perhaps, with an appearance of tender fondneſs; and many more by the almoſt irreſiſtible art of banter and ridicule: That boaſted teſt of right and wrong, as it has been wantonly called, will be tried upon you, perhaps without any regard to decency, or even to common humanity. You will be derided and inſulted

(f) Mat. xvi. 24.

ſulted by thoſe, whoſe eſteem and affection you naturally deſire; and may find much more propriety than you imagine, in that expreſſion of the Apoſtle, the trial of cruel mockings (g) which ſome fear more than either ſword or flames. This perſecution of the tongue you muſt expect to go thro', and perhaps may be branded as a lunatic, for no other cauſe, than that you begin to exerciſe your reaſon to purpoſe, and will not join with thoſe that are deſtroying their own ſouls, in their wild career of folly and madneſs.

§. 4. And it is not at all improbable, that in the mean time Satan may be doing his utmoſt to diſcourage and diſtreſs you. He will no doubt, raiſe in your imagination the moſt tempting idea of the gratifications, the indulgences, and the companions, you are obliged to forſake; and give you the moſt diſcouraging and terrifying view of the difficulties, ſeverities, and dangers, which are (as he will perſuade you,) inſeparable from religion. He will not fail to repreſent God himſelf, the fountain of goodneſs and happineſs, as an hard maſter, whom it is impoſſible to pleaſe. He will perhaps fill you with the moſt diſtreſsful fears, and with cruel and inſolent malice glory over you as his ſlave, when he knows you are the Lord's freeman. At one time he will ſtudy by his vile ſuggeſtions to interrupt you in your duties, as if they gave him an additional power over you: At another time he will endeavour to weary you of your devotion, by influencing you to prolong it to an immoderate and tedious length, leſt his power ſhould be exerted upon you when it ceaſes. In ſhort, this practiſed deceiver has artifices, which it would require whole volumes to diſplay, with particular cautions againſt each. And he will follow you with malicious arts and purſuits to the very end of your pilgrimage; and will leave no method unattempted, which may be likely to weaken your hands, and to ſadden your heart; that if, thro' the gracious interpoſition of God, he cannot prevent your final happineſs, he may at leaſt impair your peace and your uſefulneſs, as you are paſſing to it. §. 5.

(g) Heb. xl. 36.

§. 5. This is what the people of God feel; and what you will feel in ſome degree or other, if you have your lot and your portion among them. But after all, be not diſcouraged: Chriſt is the captain of your ſalvation (h). It is delightful to conſider him under this view. When we take a ſurvey of theſe hoſts of enemies, we may lift up our head amidſt them all, and ſay, more and greater is he that is with us, than all thoſe that are againſt us (i). Truſt in the Lord, and you will be like mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever (k.) When your enemies preſs upon you, remember you are to fight in the preſence of God (l). Endeavour therefore to act a gallant and a reſolute part: Endeavour to reſiſt them ſtedfaſt in the faith (m). Remember, he can give power to the faint, and increaſe ſtrength to them that have no might (n). He hath done it in ten thouſand inſtances already; and he will do it in ten thouſand more. How many ſtriplings have conquered their gigantic foes in all their moſt formidable armour, when they have gone forth againſt them, tho' but as it were with a ſtaff and a ſling, in the name of the Lord God of Iſrael (o). How many women and children have trodden down the force of the enemy, and out of weakneſs have been made ſtrong (p)!

§. 6. Amidſt all the oppoſition of earth and hell, look upward, and look forward; and you will feel your heart animated by the view. Your General is near: He is near to aid you: He is near to reward you.—When you feel the temptations preſs the hardeſt, think of him who endured even the croſs itſelf for your reſcue. View the fortitude of your divine leader, and endeavour to march on in his ſteps. Hearken to his voice, for he proclaims it aloud, behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me (q): Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life (r). And Oh how bright will it ſhine! and how long will its luſtre laſt! When the gems that adorn the crowns of monarchs, and

(h) Heb. ii. 20. (i) 2 Kings vi. 6. (k) Pſal. cxxv. 1
[l] Zech. x. 5. [m] 1 Pet. v. 9. [n] Iſa. xl 29.
[o] 1 Sam. xvii. 40, 45. [p] Heb. xi. 34. [q] Rev. xxii. 12.
[r] Rev. ii. 10.

and paſs (inſtructive thought!) from one royal head to another thro' ſucceeding centuries, are melted down in the laſt flame, it is a crown of glory which fadeth not away (s).

§. 7. It is indeed true, that ſuch as turn aſide to crooked paths, will be led forth with the workers of iniquity (t) to that terrible execution, which the divine juſtice is preparing for them; and it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteouſneſs, than after having known it, to turn aſide from the holy commandment (u). But I would, by divine grace, hope better things of you (x). And I make it my hearty prayer for you, my reader, that you may be kept by the mighty power of God, kept as in a garriſon, on all ſides fortified, in the ſecureſt manner, thro' faith unto ſalvation (y).

The ſoul alarmed by a ſenſe of theſe difficulties, committing itſelf to divine protection.

"BLESSED GOD, it is to thine Almighty power that I flee. Behold me ſurrounded with difficulties and dangers, and ſtretch out thine omnipotent arm to ſave me; Oh thou that ſaveſt by thy right hand them that put their truſt in thee, from thoſe that riſe up againſt them (z)! This day do I ſolemnly put myſelf under thy protection: Exert thy power in my favour, and permit me to make the ſhadow of thy wings my refuge (a)! Let thy grace be ſufficient for me, and thy ſtrength be made perfect in my weakneſs (b)! I dare not ſay, I will never forſake thee; I will never deny thee (c): But I hope, I can truly ſay, O Lord, I would not do it; and that according to my preſent apprehenſion and purpoſe, death would appear to me much leſs terrible, than in any willful and deliberate inſtance to offend thee. Oh root out thoſe corruptions from my heart, which in an hour of preſſing temptation might incline

[s] 1 Pet. v. 4. [t] Pſal. cxxv. 5. [u] 2 Pet. ii. 21.
[x] Heb. vi. 9. [y] 1 Pet. i. 5. [z] Pſal. xvii. 7.
[a] Pſal. lvii. 1. [b] 2 Cor. xii. 9. [c] Mark xiv. 31.

incline me to view things in a different light, and ſo might betray me into the hand of the enemy! ſtrengthen my faith, O Lord, and encourage my hope! inſpire me with an heroic reſolution in oppoſing every thing that lies in my way to heaven; and let me ſet my face like a flint (d), againſt all the aſſaults of earth and hell! If ſinners entice me, let me not conſent (e); if they inſult me, let me not regard it; if they threaten me, let me not fear! Rather may a holy and ardent, yet prudent and well-governed zeal, take occaſion from that malignity of heart which they diſcover, to attempt their conviction and reformation! At leaſt, let me never be aſhamed to plead thy cauſe againſt the moſt profane deriders of religion! make me to hear joy and gladneſs in my ſoul; and I will endeavour to teach tranſgreſſors thy ways, that ſinners may be converted unto thee (f)! Yea, Lord, while my fears continue, tho' I ſhould apprehend myſelf condemned, I am condemned ſo righteouſly for my own folly, that I would be thine advocate, tho' againſt myſelf.

Keep me, O Lord, now, and at all times! Never let me think, whatever age or ſtation I attain, that I am ſtrong enough to maintain the combat without thee! nor let me imagine myſelf, even in this infancy of religion in my ſoul, ſo weak, that thou canſt not ſupport me! Where-ever thou leadeſt me, there let me follow; and whatever ſtation thou appointeſt me, there let me labour; there let me maintain the Holy war againſt all the enemies of my ſalvation, and rather fall in it, than baſely abandon it!

And thou, O glorious Redeemer, the captain of my ſalvation, the great author and finiſher of my faith (g), when I am in danger of denying thee, as Peter did, look upon me with that mixture of majeſty and tenderneſs (h), which may either ſecure me from falling, or may ſpeedily recover me to God and my duty again! and teach me to take occaſion, even from my miſcarriages, to humble myſelf more deeply for all that has been amiſs, and to redouble my future diligence and caution! *Amen.*

O CHAP.

[d] Iſa. l. 7. [e] Prov. i. 10. [f] Pſal. li. 8, 13. [g] Heb. xii. 2. [h] Luke xxii. 61.

CHAP. XVII.

The Chriſtian urged to, and aſſiſted in, an expreſs Act of Self-dedication to the Service of God.

The advantages of ſuch a ſurrender are briefly ſuggeſted, §. 1. *Advices for the manner of doing it; that it be deliberate, chearful, entire, and perpetual;* §. 2, 3, 4. *and that it be expreſſed with ſome affecting ſolemnity.* §. 5. *A written inſtrument to be ſigned and declared before God at ſome ſeaſon of extraordinary devotion, propoſed.* §. 6, 7. *The chapter concludes with a ſpecimen of ſuch an inſtrument, together with an abſtract of it, to be uſed with proper and requiſite alterations.*

§. 1. AS I would hope, that notwithſtanding all the views of oppoſition which do or may ariſe, yet in conſideration of thoſe noble ſupports and motives which have been mentioned in the two preceeding chapters, you are heartily determined for the ſervice of God, I would now urge you to make a ſolemn ſurrender of yourſelf unto it. Do not only form ſuch a purpoſe in your heart, but expreſly declare it in the divine preſence. Such ſolemnity in the manner of doing it, is certainly very reaſonable in the nature of things; and ſure it is highly expedient, for binding to the Lord ſuch a treacherous heart, as we know our own to be.—It will be pleaſant to reflect upon it, as done at ſuch and ſuch a time, with ſuch and ſuch circumſtances of place and method which may ſerve to ſtrike the memory and the conſcience. The ſenſe of the vows of God which are upon you, will ſtrengthen you in an hour of temptation; and the recollection may alſo encourage your humble boldneſs and freedom in applying to him, under the character and relation of your covenant God and Father, as future exigencies may require.

§. 2. Do it therefore, but do it deliberately. Conſi-

der,

der, what it is, that you are to do: And conſider, how reaſonable it is, that it ſhould be done, and done cordially and chearfully; not by conſtraint, but willingly (a): For in this ſenſe, and in every other, God loves a chearful giver (b). Now ſurely there is nothing we ſhould do with greater chearfulneſs or more cordial conſent, than making ſuch a ſurrender of ourſelves to the Lord; to the God, who created us, who brought us into this pleaſant and well furniſhed world, who ſupported us in our tender infancy, who guarded us in the thoughtleſs days of childhood and youth, who has hitherto continually helped, ſuſtained, and preſerved us. Nothing can be more reaſonable, than that we ſhould acknowledge him, as our rightful owner and our ſovereign ruler; than that we ſhould devote ourſelves to him; as our moſt gracious benefactor, and ſeek him as our ſupream felicity. Nothing can be more apparently equitable, than that we, the product of his power, and the price of his Son's blood ſhould be his, and his for ever. If you ſee the matter in its juſt view, it will be the grief of your ſoul, that you have ever alienated yourſelf from the bleſſed God and his ſervice; ſo far will you be from wiſhing to continue in that eſtate of alienation another year, or another day. You will rejoice to bring back to him his revolted creature; and as you have in times paſt yielded your members as inſtruments of unrighteouſneſs unto ſin, you will delight to yield yourſelves unto God, as alive from the dead, and to employ your members as inſtruments of righteouſneſs unto God (c).

§. 3. The ſurrender will alſo be as entire, as it is chearful and immediate. All you are, all you have, and all you can do, your poſſeſſions, your influence over others, will be devoted to him, that for the future it may be employed entirely for him, and to his glory.—You will deſire to keep back nothing from him; but will ſeriouſly judge, that you are then in the trueſt and nobleſt ſenſe *your own*, when you are *moſt entirely his*. You are alſo on this great occaſion, to reſign all that

[a] 1 Pet. v. 2. [b] 2 Cor. ix. [c] Rom. vi. 13.

you have to the diſpoſal of his wiſe and gracious providence; not only owning his power, but conſenting to his undoubted right, to do what he pleaſes with you, and all that he has given you; and declaring a hearty approbation of all that he has done, and of all that he may farther do.

§. 4. Once more, let me remind you, that this ſurrender muſt be perpetual. You muſt give yourſelf up to God in ſuch a manner, as never more to pretend to be your own, for the rights of God are, like his nature, eternal and immutable; and with regard to his rational creatures, are the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever.

§. 5. I would farther adviſe and urge, that this dedication may be made with all poſſible ſolemnity. Do it in expreſs words. And perhaps, it may be in many caſes moſt expedient, as many pious divines have recommended, to do it in writing, ſet your hand and ſeal to it, "that on ſuch a day of ſuch a month and year, and at ſuch a place, on full conſideration and ſerious reflection, you came to this happy reſolution, that whatever others might do, you would ſerve the Lord (d).

§. 6. Such an inſtrument, you may, if you pleaſe, draw up for yourſelf; or if you rather chuſe to have it drawn up to your hand, you may find ſomething of this nature below, in which you may eaſily make ſuch alterations as ſhall ſuit your circumſtances, where there is any thing peculiar in them. But whatever you uſe, weigh it well, meditate attentively upon it, that you may not be raſh with your mouth to utter any thing before God (e). And when you determine to execute this inſtrument, let the tranſaction be attended with ſome more than ordinary religious retirement. Make it, if you conveniently can, a day of ſecret faſting and prayer; and when your heart is prepared with a becoming awe of the divine majeſty, with an humble confidence in his goodneſs, and an earneſt deſire of his favour, then preſent yourſelf on your knees before God, and read it over deliberately and ſolemnly; and when you

[d] Joſh. xxiv. 15. [e] Eccl. v. 2.

you have ſigned it, lay it by in ſome ſecure place, where you may review it whenever you pleaſe; and make it a rule with yourſelf, to review it, if poſſible, at certain ſeaſons of the year, that you may keep up the remembrance of it.

§. 7. At leaſt, take this courſe, 'till you ſee your way clear to the table of the Lord, where you are to renew the ſame covenant and to ſeal it, with more affecting ſolemnities. And God grant, that you may be enabled to keep it, and in the whole of your converſation to walk according to it! May it be an anchor to your ſoul in every temptation, and a cordial to it in every affliction! May the recollection of it embolden your addreſſes to the throne of grace now, and give additional ſtrength to your departing ſpirit, in a conſciouſneſs that it is aſcending to your covenant God and Father, and to that gracious Redeemer whoſe power and faithfulneſs will ſecurely keep what you commit to him until that day (f)!

An example of Self-Dedication, *or a ſolemn form of renewing our Covenant with God.*

"ETERNAL and unchangeable Jehovah! thou great creator of heaven and earth, and adorable Lord of angels and men! I deſire with the deepeſt humiliation and abaſement of ſoul, to fall down at this time in thine awful preſence; and earneſtly pray, that thou wilt penetrate my very heart with a ſuitable ſenſe of thine unutterable and inconceiveable glories!

"Trembling may juſtly take hold upon me (g), when I a ſinful worm preſume to lift up my head to thee, preſume to appear in thy majeſtic preſence on ſuch an occaſion as this. Who am, I, O Lord God, or what is my houſe (h)? what is my nature or deſcent, my character, and deſert, that I ſhould ſpeak of this, and deſire that I may be one party in a Covenant, where thou, the king of kings and Lord of Lords, art the other? I bluſh and

(f) 2 Tim. i. 12. (g) Job. xxi. 6. (h) 2 Sam. vii. 18.

am confounded, even to mention it before thee. But, O Lord, great is thy majeſty, ſo alſo is thy mercy. If thou wilt hold converſe with any of thy creatures, thy ſuperlatively exalted nature muſt ſtoop, muſt ſtoop infinitely low. And I know, that in and thro' Jeſus, the ſon of thy love, thou condeſcendeſt to viſit ſinful mortals, and to allow their approach to thee, and their Covenant-intercourſe with thee, nay, I know, that the ſcheme and plan is thine own; and that thou haſt graciouſly ſent to propoſe it to us; as none untaught by thee would have been able to form it, or inclined to embrace it even when actually propoſed.

"To thee therefore do I now come, invited by the name of thy ſon, and truſt in his righteouſneſs and grace. Laying myſelf at thy feet with ſhame and confuſion of face, and ſmiting upon my breaſt, I ſay with the humble Publican, God be merciful to me a ſinner (i)! I acknowledge, O Lord, that I have been a great tranſgreſſor.—My ſins have reached unto heaven (k), and mine iniquities are lifted up unto the ſkies (l). The irregular propenſities of my corrupted and degenerate nature have, in ten thouſand aggravated inſtances, wrought to bring forth fruit unto death (m). And if thou ſhouldſt be ſtrict to mark mine offences, I muſt be ſilent under the load of guilt, and immediately ſink into deſtruction. But thou haſt graciouſly called me to return unto thee, tho' I have been a wandering ſheep, a prodigal ſon, a backſliding child (n). Behold therefore, O Lord, I come unto thee. I come, convinced not only of my ſin, but of my folly. I come from my very heart aſhamed of myſelf, and with an acknowledgment in the ſincerity and humility of my ſoul, that I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly (o).————I am confounded myſelf at the remembrance of theſe things: But be thou merciful to my unrighteouſneſs, and do not remember againſt me my ſins and my tranſgreſſions (p)! permit me, O Lord, to bring back unto thee thoſe powers and faculties, which I have ungratefully and ſacrilegiouſly alienated from thy ſervice;

(i) Luke xviii. 13. (k) Rev. xviii. 5. (l) Jer. li. 9. (m) Rom. vii. 5. (n) Jer. iii. 22. (o) 1 Sam. xxvi. 21. (p) Heb. viii. 12.

ſervice; and receive, I beſeech thee, thy poor revolted creature, who is now convinced of thy right to him, and deſires nothing in the whole world ſo much as to be thine!

"Bleſſed God, it is with the utmoſt ſolemnity that I make this ſurrender of myſelf unto thee. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; I avouch the Lord this day to be my God (q); and I avouch and declare myſelf this day to be one of his Covenant children and people. Hear, O thou God of heaven, and record it in the book of thy remembrance (r), that henceforth I am thine, entirely thine. I would not merely conſecrate unto thee ſome of my powers, or ſome of my poſſeſſions; or give thee a certain proportion of my ſervices, or all I am capable of for a limited time; but I would be wholly thine, and thine for ever. From this day, do I ſolemnly renounce all the former Lords which have had dominion over me (s), every ſin and every luſt; and bid in thy name an eternal defiance, to the powers of hell, which have moſt unjuſtly uſurped the empire over my ſoul, and to all the corruptions which their fatal temptations have introduced into it. The whole frame of my nature, all the faculties of my mind, and, all the members of my body, would I preſent before thee this day, as a living ſacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which I know to be my moſt reaſonable ſervice (t). To thee I conſecrate all my worldly poſſeſſions: In thy ſervice I deſire to ſpend all the remainder of my time upon earth, and beg thou wouldſt inſtruct and influence me, ſo that, whether my abode here be longer or ſhorter, every year and month, every day and hour, may be uſed in ſuch a manner as ſhall moſt effectually promote thine honour, and ſubſerve the ſchemes of thy wiſe and gracious providence. And I earneſtly pray, that whatever influence thou giveſt me over others, in any of the ſuperior relations of life in which I may ſtand, or in conſequence of any peculiar regard which may be paid to me; thou wouldſt give me ſtrength and courage to exert myſelf to the utmoſt for thy glory: Reſolving, not only that I will myſelf do it, but that all others,

(q) Deut. xxvi. 17. (r) Mal. iii. 16. (s) Iſa. xxvi. 13. (t) Rom. xii. 1.

thers, ſo far as I can rationally and properly influence them, ſhall ſerve the Lord (u). In this courſe, O bleſſed God, would I ſteadily perſevere to the very end of my life; earneſtly praying, that every future day of it may ſupply the deficiencies, and correct the irregularities of the former; and that I may by divine grace be enabled, not only to hold on in that happy way, but daily to grow more active in it!

"Nor do I only conſecrate all that I am, and have, to thy ſervice; but I alſo moſt humbly reſign, and ſubmit to thine holy and ſovereign will, myſelf, and all that I can call mine. I leave, O Lord, to thy management, and direction all I poſſeſs, and all I wiſh; and every enjoyment and every intereſt before thee, to be diſpoſed of as thou pleaſeſt, continue, or remove, what thou haſt given me; beſtow, or refuſe, what I imagine I want, as thou, Lord ſhalt ſee good! and tho' I dare not ſay, I will never repine; yet I hope I may venture to ſay, that I will labour, not only to ſubmit, but to acquieſce; not only to bear what thou doeſt in thy moſt afflictive diſpenſations, but to conſent to it, and to praiſe thee for it; contentedly reſolving, in all that thou appointeſt for me, my will into thine, and looking on myſelf as nothing, and on thee O God, as the great eternal All, whoſe word ought to determine every thing, and whoſe Government ought to be the joy of the whole rational creation.

"Uſe me, O Lord I beſeech thee, as the inſtrument of thy glory, and honour me ſo far, as, either by doing or ſuffering what thou ſhalt appoint, to bring ſome revenue of praiſe to thee, and of benefit to the world in which I dwell! and may it pleaſe thee, from this day forward, to number me among thy peculiar people, that I may no more be a ſtranger and foreigner, but a fellow-citizen with the ſaints, and of the houſhold of God (w)! receive O heavenly father, thy returning prodigal! waſh me in the blood of thy dear ſon; clothe me with his perfect righteouſneſs; and ſanctify me throughout by the power of thy ſpirit! deſtroy, I beſeech thee, more and more the power of ſin in mine heart! transform me more into thine own

(u) Joſh. xxiv. 14. (w) Eph. ii. 19.

own image, and faſhion me to the reſemblance of Jeſus, whom hence-forward I would acknowledge as my teacher and ſacrifice, my interceſſor and my Lord! communicate to me, I beſeech thee, all needful influences of thy purifying, thy chearing, and thy comforting ſpirit! and lift up that light of thy countenance upon me, which will put the ſublimeſt joy and gladneſs into my ſoul (x)?

"diſpoſe my affairs, O God, in a manner which may be moſt ſubſervient to thy glory and my own trueſt happineſs; and when I have done and borne thy will upon earth, call me from hence, at what time, and in what manner thou pleaſeſt: Only grant, that in my dying moments, and in the near proſpects of eternity, I may remember theſe my engagements to thee and may employ my lateſt breath in thy ſervice! and do thou, Lord, when thou ſeeſt the agonies of diſſolving nature upon me, remember this covenant too, even tho' I ſhould then be incapable of recollecting it! look down, O my heavenly father, with a pitying eye upon thy languiſhing, thy dying child; place thine everlaſting arms underneath me for my ſupport; put ſtrength and confidence into my departing ſpirit; and receive it to the embraces of thine everlaſting love! welcome it to the abodes of them that ſleep in Jeſus (y), to wait with them that glorious day, when the laſt of thy promiſes to thy covenant people ſhall be fulfilled in their triumphant reſurrection, and that abundant entrance, which ſhall be adminiſtred to them into that everlaſting kingdom (z), of which thou haſt aſſured them by thy covenant, and in the hope of which I now lay hold on it, deſiring to live and to die, as with mine hand on that hope!

"And when I am thus numbered among the dead, and all the intereſts of mortality are over with me for ever, if this ſolemn memorial ſhould chance to fall into the hands of any ſurviving friends, may it be the means of making ſerious impreſſions on their mind! may they read it, not only as my language, but as their own; and learn to fear the Lord my God, and with me to put their truſt under the ſhadow of his wings for time and for eternity!

(x) Pſal. iv. 6, 7. [y] 1 Theſ. iv. 14. [z] 2 Pet. i. 12.

nity! and may they alſo learn to adore with me that grace, which inclines our hearts to enter into the covenant, and condeſcends to admit us into it when ſo inclined; aſcribing with me, and with all the nations of the redeemed, to the father, the ſon, and the holy ghoſt, that glory, honour, and praiſe, which is ſo juſtly due to each divine perſon for the part he bears in this illuſtrious work! *Amen.*"

N. B. For the ſake of thoſe who may think the preceeding form of ſelf-dedication too long to be tranſcribed, (as it is probable many will,) I have at the deſire of a much eſteemed friend added the following abridgement of it, which ſhould by all means be attentively weighed in every clauſe, before it is executed; and any word or phraſe which may ſeem liable to exception changed, that the whole heart may conſent to it all.

" Eternal and ever bleſſed God! I deſire to preſent myſelf before thee, with the deepeſt humiliation and abaſement of ſoul; ſenſible how unworthy ſuch a ſinful worm is, to appear before the holy majeſty of heaven, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and eſpecially on ſuch an occaſion as this, even to enter into a Covenant tranſaction with thee. But the ſcheme, and plan, is thine own. Thine infinite condeſcenſion hath offered it by thy ſon, and thy grace hath inclined my heart to accept of it.

" I come therefore, acknowledging myſelf to have been a great offender; ſmiting on my breaſt and ſaying with the humble Publican, God be merciful to me a ſinner! I come, invited by the name of thy ſon, and wholly truſting in his perfect righteouſneſs; intreating, that for his ſake thou wilt be merciful to my unrighteouſneſs, and wilt no more remember my ſins. Receive, I beſeech thee, thy revolted creature, who is now convinced of thy right to him, and deſires nothing ſo much as that he may be thine!

" This day do I, with the utmoſt ſolemnity, ſurrender myſelf to thee. I renounce all former Lords that have

have had dominion over me; and I conſecrate to thee all that I am, and all that I have; the faculties of my mind, the members of my body, my worldly poſſeſſions, my time, and my influence over others; to be all uſed entirely for thy glory; and reſolutely employed in obedience to thy commands, as long as thou continueſt me in life; with an ardent deſire and humble reſolution to continue thine, thro' all the endleſs ages of eternity: Ever holding myſelf in an attentive poſture to obſerve the firſt intimations of thy will, and ready to ſpring forward with zeal and joy, to the immediate execution of it.

" To thy direction alſo I reſign myſelf, and all I am and have, to be diſpoſed of by thee in ſuch a manner, as thou ſhalt in thine infinite wiſdom judge moſt ſubſervient to the purpoſes of thy glory. To thee I leave the management of all events, and ſay without reſerve, not my will, but thine be done! rejoicing with a loyal heart in thine unlimited government, as what ought to be the delight of the whole rational creation.

" Uſe me, O Lord, I beſeech thee, as an inſtrument of thy ſervice! Number me among thy peculiar people! Let me be waſhed in the blood of thy dear ſon! Let me be clothed with his righteouſneſs! Let me be ſanctified by his ſpirit! Transform me more and more into his image! Impart to me, thro' him, all needful influences of thy purifying, chearing, and comforting ſpirit! And let my life be ſpent under thoſe influences and in the light of thy gracious countenance as my father and my God!

" And when the ſolemn hour of death comes, may I remember this thy covenant, well ordered in all things and ſure, as all my ſalvation, and all my deſire (a), tho' every other hope and enjoyment is periſhing! And do thou, O Lord, remember it too! Look down with pity, O my heavenly Father, on thy languiſhing dying child! Embrace me in thine everlaſting arms! Put ſtrength and confidence into my departing ſpirit! And receive it to the abodes of them that ſleep in Jeſus, peacefully, and joyfully

[a] 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

joyfully to wait the accompliſhment of thy great promiſe to all thy people, even that of a glorious reſurrection, and of eternal happineſs in thine heavenly preſenſe! And if any ſurviving friend ſhould, when I am in the duſt, meet with this memorial of my ſolemn tranſactions with thee, may he make the engagement his own; and do thou graciouſly admit him to partake in all the bleſſings of thy covenant, thro' Jeſus the great mediator of it; to whom, with thee, O Father, and thy Holy Spirit, be everlaſting praiſes aſcribed, by all the millions who are thus ſaved by thee, and by all thoſe other celeſtial ſpirits, in whoſe work and bleſſedneſs thou ſhalt call them to ſhare! *Amen.*"

CHAP. XVIII.

Of entering into Church-communion by an Attendance upon the Lord's Supper.

The reader, being already ſuppoſed to have entered into covenant with God, §. 1. *is urged publicly to ſeal that engagement at the table of the Lord:* §. 2. *(1.) From a view of the ends for which that ordinance was inſtituted;* §. 3. *whence its uſefulneſs is ſtrongly inferred.* § 4. *And, (2.) from the authority of Chriſt's appointment; which is ſolemnly preſſed on the conſcience.* §. 5. *Objections from apprehenſions of unfitneſs.* §. 6. *Weakneſs of grace,* &c. *briefly anſwered.* §. 7. *At leaſt, ſerious thoughtfulneſs on this ſubject is abſolutely inſiſted upon.* §. 8. *The chapter is cloſed with a prayer for one, who deſires to attend, yet finds himſelf preſſed with remaining doubts.*

§. 1. I HOPE, this chapter will find you by a moſt expreſs conſent become one of God's covenant people, ſolemnly and cordially devoted to his ſervice; and it is my hearty prayer, that the covenant you have made on earth may be ratified in heaven. But for your farther inſtruction and edification give me leave to remind

mind you, that our Lord Jeſus Chriſt hath appointed a peculiar manner of expreſſing our regard to him, and of ſolemnly renewing our covenant with him; which, tho' it does not forbid any other proper way of doing it, muſt by no means be ſet aſide, or neglected, for any human methods, how prudent and expedient ſoever they may appear to us.

§. 2. Our Lord has wiſely ordained, that the advantages of ſociety ſhould be brought into religion; and as by his command profeſſing chriſtians aſſemble together for other acts of public worſhip, ſo he has been pleaſed to inſtitute a ſocial ordinance, in which a whole aſſembly of them is to come to his table, and there to eat the ſame bread, and drink the ſame cup. And this they are to do, as a token of their affectionate remembrance of his dying love, of their ſolemn ſurrender of themſelves to God, and of their ſincere love to one another and to all their fellow-chriſtians.

§. 3. That theſe are indeed the great ends of the Lord's ſupper, I ſhall not now ſtay to argue at large.—You need only read what the Apoſtle Paul has written in the tenth and eleventh chapters of his firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians, to convince you fully of this. He there expreſly tells us, that our Lord commanded the bread to be eaten, and the wine to be drank, in remembrance of him (a), or as a commemoration or memorial of him: ſo that as often as we attend this inſtitution, we ſhew forth our Lord's death, which we are to do even until he come (b). And it is particularly aſſerted, that the cup is the New Teſtament in his blood (c); that is, it is a ſeal of that covenant which was ratified by his blood. Now it is evident, that in conſequence of this, we are to approach it with a view to that covenant, deſiring its bleſſings, and reſolving with divine grace to comply with its demands. On the whole therefore, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, we have communion in the body, and the blood of Chriſt (d), and partaking of his table and of his cup, we converſe with Chriſt, and join

 ourſelves

(a) 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25. (b) Ver. 26. (c) Ver. 25.
(d) 1 Cor. x. 16.

ourſelves to him as his people; as the heathens in their idolatrous rites, had communion with their deities, and joined themſelves to them; and the Jews, by eating their ſacrifices, converſed with Jehovah, and joined themſelves to him. He farther reminds them, that tho' many, they were one bread and one body, being all partakers of that one bread (e), and being all made to drink into one ſpirit (f); that is, meeting together as if they were but one family, and joining in the commemoration of that one blood which was their common ranſom, and of the Lord Jeſus their common head. Now it is evident, all theſe reaſonings are equally applicable to chriſtians in ſucceeding ages. Permit me therefore, by the authority of our divine maſter, to preſs upon you the obſervation of this precept.

§. 4. And let me alſo urge it, from the apparent tendency which it has to promote your trueſt advantage. You are ſetting out in the chriſtian life; and I have reminded you at large, of the oppoſition you muſt expect to meet with in it. It is the love of Chriſt which muſt animate you to break thro' all. What then can be more deſireable, than to bear about with you a lively ſenſe of it? and what can awaken that ſenſe more, than the contemplation of his death as there repreſented? Who can behold the bread broken, and the wine poured out, and not reflect, how the body of the bleſſed Jeſus was even torn in pieces by his ſufferings, and his ſacred blood poured forth like water on the ground? Who can think of the heart-rending agonies of the Son of God, as the price of our redemption and ſalvation, and not feel his ſoul melted with tenderneſs, and inflamed with grateful affection? What an exalted view doth it give us of the bleſſings of the goſpel-covenant, when we conſider it as 'eſtabliſhed in the blood of God's only begotten Son?' And when we make our approach to God as our heavenly Father, and give up ourſelves to his ſervice in this ſolemn manner, what an awful tendency has it to fix the conviction, that 'we are not our own, being bought with ſuch a price (g)?

What

(e) 1 Cor. x. 17. (f) 1 Cor. xii. 13. (g) 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

What a tendency has it, to guard againſt every temptation to thoſe ſins which we have ſo ſolemnly renounced, and to engage our fidelity to him to whom we have 'bound our ſouls as with an oath?' Well may 'our hearts be knit together in mutual love (h), when we conſider ourſelves as one in Chriſt (i): His blood becomes the cement of the ſociety, joins us in ſpirit, not only to each other, but 'to all that in every place call upon the name of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, both theirs and ours (k):' And we anticipate, in pleaſing hope, that bleſſed day, when the aſſembly ſhall be compleat, and we ſhall all 'be for ever with the Lord (l).' Well may theſe views engage us to 'deny ourſelves, and to take up our croſs to follow our crucified Maſter (m):'—Well may they engage us to do our utmoſt, by prayer and all other ſuitable endeavours, to ſerve his followers and his friends; to ſerve thoſe, whom he hath purchaſed with his blood, and who are to be his aſſociates, and ours, in the glories of an happy immortality.

§. 5. It is alſo the expreſs inſtitution and command of our bleſſed Redeemer, that the members of ſuch ſocieties ſhould be tenderly ſolicitous for the ſpiritual welfare of each other: And that, on the whole, his churches may be kept pure and holy, that they ſhould 'withdraw themſelves from every brother that walketh diſorderly (n):' that they ſhould 'mark ſuch as cauſe offences or ſcandals amongſt them, contrary to the doctrine which they have learned, and avoid them (o);' that 'if any obey not the word of Chriſt, by his Apoſtles, they ſhould have no fellowſhip or communion with ſuch, that they may be aſhamed (p);' that they ſhould not eat with ſuch, as are notoriouſly irregular in their behaviour, but on the contrary ſhould put away from among themſelves ſuch wicked perſons (q). It is evident therefore, that the inſtitution of ſuch ſocieties is greatly for the honour of chriſtianity, and for the advantage of its particular profeſſors. And conſequently

(h) Col. ii. 2. (i) Gal. iii. 28. (k) 1 Cor. i. 2. (l) 1 Theſſ. iv. 17. (m) Mat. xvi 24. [n] 2 Theſſ. iii. 6. [o] Rom. xvi. 17. [p] 2 Theſſ. iii. 14. [q] 1 Cor. v. 11, 13.

ſequently, every conſideration of obedience to our common Lord, and of prudent regard to our own benefit and that of our brethren, will require, that thoſe who love our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity, ſhould enter into them, and aſſemble among them in theſe their moſt ſolemn and peculiar acts of communion at his table.

§. 6. I intreat you therefore, and, if I may preſume to ſay it, in his name and by his authority I charge it on your conſcience, that this precept of our dying Lord, go not, as it were, for nothing with you; but that, if you indeed love him, you keep this, as well as the reſt of his commandments.——I know, you may be ready to form objections. I have elſewhere debated many of the chief of them at large, and I hope, not without ſome good effect.* The great queſtion is that, which relates to your being prepared for a worthy attendance: And in conjunction with what has been ſaid before, I think that may be brought to a very ſhort iſſue. Have you, ſo far as you know your own heart, been ſincere in that deliberate ſurrender of yourſelf to God thro' Chriſt, which I recommended in the former chapter? If you have, (whether it were with, or without the particular form or manner of doing it there recommended,) you have certainly taken hold of the covenant, and therefore have a right to the ſeal of it. And there is not, and cannot be, any other view of the ordinance, in which you can have any farther objection to it. If you deſire to remember Chriſt's death, if you deſire to renew the dedication of yourſelf to God thro' him, if you would liſt yourſelf among his people, if you would love them and do them good according to your ability, and, on the whole, would not allow yourſelf in the practice of any one known ſin, or in the omiſſion of one known duty, then I will venture confidently to ſay, not only that you may be welcome to the ordinance, but that it was inſtituted for ſuch as you.

§. 7. As for other objections, a few words may ſuffice by way of reply. The weakneſs of the religious principle in your ſoul, if it be really implanted there, is

* See the fourth of my ſermons to young perſons.

is so far from being an argument against your seeking such a method to strengthen it, that it rather strongly inforces the necessity of doing it.—The neglect of this solemnity, by so many that call themselves christians, should rather engage you so much the more to distinguish your zeal for an institution, in this respect so much slighted and injured.——And as for the fears of aggravated guilt in case of apostacy, do not indulge them. This may, by the divine blessing, be an effectual remedy against the evil you fear; and, it is certain, that after what you must already have known and felt, before you could be brought into your present situation, (on the suppositions I have now been making,) there can be no room to think of a retreat; no room, even for the wretched hope of being less miserable than the generality of those that have perished. Your scheme therefore must be, to make your salvation as sure, and to make it as glorious as possible: And I know not any appointment of our blessed Redeemer, which may have a more comfortable aspect upon that blessed end, than this which I am recommending to you.

§. 8. One thing I would at least insist upon, and I see not with what face it can be denied. I mean, that you should take this matter into a serious consideration; that you should diligently enquire, 'whether you have reason in your conscience to believe, it is the will of God you should now approach to the ordinance, or not:' And that you should continue your reflections, your enquiries, and your prayers, till you find farther encouragement to come, if that encouragement be hitherto wanting. For of this be assured, that a state in which you are on the whole unfit to approach this ordinance, is a state in which you are destitute of the necessary preparations for death and heaven; in which therefore, if you would not allow yourselves to slumber on the brink of destruction, you ought not to rest so much as one single day.

A Prayer *for one, who earnestly desires to approach to the* table of the Lord, *yet has some remaining doubts concerning his right to that solemn ordinance.*

"BLESSED LORD, I adore thy wise and gracious appointments, for the edification of thy church in holiness and love. I thank thee, that thou hast commanded thy servants, to form themselves into societies; and I adore my gracious Saviour, who hath instituted, as with his dying breath, the holy solemnity of his supper, to be thro' all ages a memorial of his dying love, and a bond of that union which it is his sovereign pleasure that his people should preserve. I hope, thou, Lord, art witness to the sincerity, with which I desire to give myself up to thee; and that I may call thee to record on my soul, that if I now hesitate about this particular manner of doing it, it is not because I would allow myself to break any of thy commands, or to slight any of thy favours. I trust, thou knowest, that my present delay arises only from an uncertainty as to my duty, and a fear of profaning holy things by an unworthy approach to them. Yet surely, O Lord, if thou hast given me a reverence for thy command, a desire of communion with thee, and a willingness to devote myself wholly to thy service, I may regard it as a token for good, that thou art disposed to receive me, and that I am not wholly unqualified for an ordinance, which I so highly honour, and so earnestly desire. I therefore make it my humble request unto thee, O Lord, this day, that thou wouldst graciously be pleased to instruct me in my duty, and to teach me the way which I should take! Examine me, O Lord, and prove me, try my reins and my heart (r)! Is there any secret sin, to the love and practice of which I would indulge? Is there any of thy precepts, in the habitual breach of which I would allow myself? I trust, I can appeal to thee as a witness, that there is not. Let me not then wrong mine own soul, by a causeless and sinful absence from thy sacred table! But grant, O Lord, I

(r) Psal. xxvi. 2.

I beſeech thee, that thy word, thy providence, and thy ſpirit may ſo concur, as to make my way plain before me (s)! Scatter my remaining doubts, if thou ſeeſt they have no juſt foundation! Fill me with a more aſſured faith, with a more ardent love; and plead thine own cauſe with my heart in ſuch a manner, as that I may not be able any longer to delay that approach, which, if I am thy ſervant indeed, is equally my duty and my privilege! In the mean time, grant, that it may never be long out of my thoughts: But that I may give all diligence, if there be any remaining occaſion of doubt, to remove it by a more affectionate concern to avoid whatever is diſpleaſing to the eyes of thine holineſs, and to practiſe the full extent of my duty! May the views of Chriſt crucified be ſo familiar to my mind, and may a ſenſe of his dying love ſo powerfully conſtrain my ſoul, that my own growing experience may put it out of all queſtion, that I am one of thoſe for whom he intended this feaſt of love!

"And even now, as joined to thy churches in ſpirit and in love, tho' not in ſo expreſs and intimate a bond as I could wiſh, would I heartily pray, that thy bleſſing may be on all thy people: That thou wouldſt feed thine heritage, and lift them up for ever (t)! may every chriſtian ſociety flouriſh in knowledge, in holineſs, and in love! may all thy prieſts be clothed with ſalvation, that by their means thy choſen people may be made joyful (u)! and may there be a glorious acceſſion to thy churches every where, of thoſe who may fly to them, as a cloud, and as doves to their windows (w)! may thy table, O Lord, be furniſhed with gueſts (x); and may all that love thy ſalvation ſay, let the Lord be magnified, who hath pleaſure in the proſperity of his ſervants (y)! and I earneſtly pray, that all who profeſs to have received Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, may be duly careful to walk in him (z); and that we may all be preparing for the general aſſembly of the firſt-born, and may join in that nobler and more immediate worſhip, where all theſe types and ſhadows

[s] Prov. xv. 19. [t] Pſal. xxviii. 9. [u] Pſal. cxxxii. 16. [w] Iſa. lx. 8. [x] Mat. xxii. 10. [y] Pſal. xxxv. 27. [z] Col. ii. 6.

ſhadows ſhall be laid aſide; where even theſe memorials ſhall be no longer neceſſary, but a living, preſent redeemer ſhall be the everlaſting joy of thoſe, who here in his abſence have delighted to commemorate his death!—*Amen.*"

N. B. I purpoſed to have added ſomething here, concerning a regular approach to the Lord's table, a proper attendance upon it, and ſuitable reflections after it: But I find this work will ſwell under my hand, beyond what I at firſt expected; and therefore, as theſe articles have been handled by ſo many valuable writers, I chuſe to refer to them, and particularly to Dr Earle's ſacramental exerciſes, and Mr. Grove's devotional exerciſes relating to the Lord's ſupper. Books which I think remarkably excellent in their kind, and which may be had at very eaſy rates. Yet, for the farther aſſiſtance of devout communicants, I have ſome thoughts of publiſhing a ſmall volume of ſacramental meditations on the ſelect texts of ſcripture, if God ſpare me to finiſh my expoſition on the New Teſtament, and ſome other pieces which I have now in hand.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIX.

Some more particular directions for maintaining continual communion with God, or being in his fear all the day long.

A letter to a pious friend on this ſubject introduced here. §. 1. *A general plan of directions.* §. 2. [I.] *For the beginning of the day:* §. 3 *(1.) Lifting up the heart to God at our firſt awakening:* §. 4. *(2.) Setting ourſelves to the ſecret devotions of the morning; with reſpect to which particular advices are given.* §. 5.——10. [II.] *For the progreſs of the day;* §. 11. *Directions are given concerning, (1.) Serioufneſs in devotion.* §. 12. *(2.) Diligence in buſineſs.* §. 13. *(3.) Prudence in recreations,* §. 14. *(4.) Obſervation of providences.* §. 15. *(5.) Watchfulneſs againſt temptations.* §. 16. *(6.) Dependance on divine influences.* §. 17. *(7.) Government of the thoughts when in ſolitude.* §. 18. (8.) *Management of diſcourſe in company.* §. 19. [III.] *For the concluſion of the day:* §. 20. (1.) *With the ſecret devotions of the evening.* §. 21. *Directions for ſelf-examination at large.* §. 22, 23. (2.) *Lying down with a proper temper.* §. 24. *Concluſion of the letter,* §. 25. *and of the chapter:* §. 26. *With a ſerious view of death, proper to be taken at the cloſe of the day.*

§. 1. I WOULD hope, that upon ſerious conſideration, ſelf-examination, and prayer, the reader may by this time be come to a reſolution to attend the table of the Lord, and to ſeal his vows there. I will now ſuppoſe that ſolemn tranſaction to be over, or ſome other deliberate act to have paſſed, by which he has given himſelf up to the ſervice of God; and that his concern now is to enquire, how he may act according to the vows of God which are upon him.———Now for his farther aſſiſtance

aſſiſtance here, beſides the general view I have already given of the chriſtian temper and character, I will propoſe ſome more particular directions, relating to maintaining that devout, ſpiritual, and heavenly character, which may, in the language of ſcripture, be called a daily walking with God, or being in his fear all the day long (a). And I know not how I can expreſs the idea and plan, which I have formed of this, in a more clear and diſtinct manner, than I did in a letter, which I wrote many years ago †, to a young perſon of eminent piety, with whom I had then an intimate friendſhip; and who, to the great grief of all that knew him, died a few months after he received it. Yet I hope he lived long enough to reduce the directions into practice, which I wiſh and pray that every reader may do, ſo far as they may properly ſuit his capacities and circumſtances in life, conſidering it as addreſſed to himſelf.—I ſay, (and deſire it may be obſerved,) that I wiſh my reader may act on theſe directions ſo far as they may properly ſuit his capacities and circumſtances in life; for I would be far from laying down the following particulars as univerſal rules for all, or for any one perſon in the world at all times. Let them be practiſed by thoſe that are able, and when they have leiſure: And when you cannot reach them all, come as near the moſt important of them as you conveniently can.—With this precaution I proceed to the letter, which I would hope, after this previous care to guard againſt the danger of miſtaking it, will not diſcourage any the weakeſt chriſtian. Let us humbly and chearfully do our beſt, and rejoice that we have ſo gracious a father who knows all our infirmities, and ſo compaſſionate an high prieſt to recommend to divine acceptance the feebleſt efforts of ſincere duty and love!

My dear Friend,

Since you deſire my thoughts in writing, and at large, on the ſubject of our late converſation, viz. 'By what particular methods in our daily conduct, a life of devotion

(a) Prov. xxiii. 17. † N. B. It was in the Year 1722.

tion and uſefulneſs may be moſt happily maintained and ſecured?' I ſet myſelf with chearfulneſs, to recollect and digeſt the hints which I then gave you; hoping, it may be of ſome ſervice to you in your moſt important intereſts; and may alſo fix on my own mind a deeper ſenſe of my obligations, to govern my own life by the rules I offer to others. I eſteem attempts of this kind among the pleaſanteſt fruits, and the ſureſt cements of friendſhip; and as I hope ours will laſt for ever, I am perſuaded a mutual care to cheriſh ſentiments of this kind will add everlaſting endearments to it.

§. 2. The directions you will expect from me on this occaſion, naturally divide themſelves into three heads.—How we are to regard God,——in the beginning,——the progreſs,——and the cloſe of the day. I will open my heart freely to you with regard to each, and will leave you to judge, how far theſe hints may ſuit your circumſtances; aiming at leaſt to keep between the extreams, of a ſuperſtitious ſtrictneſs in trifles, and of an indolent remiſſneſs, which, if admitted in little things, may draw after it criminal neglects, and at length yet more criminal indulgences.

§. 3. [I.] In the beginning of the day: It ſhould certainly be our care,——to lift up our hearts to God, as ſoon as we awake, and while we are ariſing;——and then, to ſet ourſelves ſeriouſly and immediately to the ſecret devotion of the morning.

§. 4. For the firſt of theſe, it ſeems exceedingly natural. There are ſo many things that may ſuggeſt a great variety of pious reflections and ejaculations, which are ſo obvious, that one would think a ſerious mind could hardly miſs them. The eaſe and chearfulneſs of our mind at our firſt awakening; the refreſhment we find from ſleep; the ſecurity we have enjoyed in that defenceleſs ſtate; the proviſion of warm and decent apparel; the chearful light of the returning ſun; or even (what is not unfit to mention to you,) the contrivances of art, taught and furniſhed by the great author of all our conveniences, to ſupply us with many uſeful hours of life in the abſence of the ſun; the hope of returning to the

the dear ſociety of our friends; the proſpect of ſpending another day, in the ſervice of God, and the improvement of our own minds; and above all, the lively hope of a joyful reſurrection to an eternal day of happineſs and glory; Any of theſe particulars, and many more which I do not mention, may furniſh us with matter of pleaſing reflection and chearful praiſe, while we are riſing.—And for our farther aſſiſtance, when we are alone at this time, it may not be improper to ſpeak ſometimes to ourſelves, and ſometimes to our heavenly father, in the natural expreſſions of joy and thankfulneſs. Permit me, Sir, to add, that if we find our hearts in ſuch a frame at our firſt awakening, even that is juſt matter of praiſe, and the rather, as perhaps it is an anſwer to the prayer with which we lay down.

§. 5. For the exerciſe of ſecret devotion in a morning, which I hope will generally be our firſt work, I cannot preſcribe an exact method to another. You muſt, my dear friend, conſult your own taſte in ſome meaſure.—The conſtituent parts of the ſervice are in the general, plain. Were I to propoſe a particular model for thoſe, who have half, or three quarters of an hour at command, (which with prudent conduct I ſuppoſe moſt may have) it ſhould be this.

§. 6. To begin the ſtated devotions of the day with a ſolemn act of praiſe, offered to God on our knees, and generally with a low, yet diſtinct voice; acknowledging the mercies, we had been reflecting on while riſing: never forgetting to mention Chriſt, as the great foundation of all our enjoyments and our hopes, or to return thanks for the influences of the bleſſed ſpirit, which have led our hearts to God, or are then engaging us to ſeek him. This, as well as other offices of devotion afterwards mentioned, muſt be done attentively and ſincerely; for not to offer our praiſes heartily, is in the ſight of God not to praiſe him at all. This addreſs of praiſe may properly be concluded with an expreſs renewal of our covenant with God, declaring our continued repeated reſolution of being devoted to him, and particularly of living to his glory the enſuing day.

§. 7. It

§. 7. It may be proper, after this, to take a proſpect of the day before us, ſo far as we can probably foreſee in the general, where and how it may be ſpent; and ſeriouſly to reflect, 'how, ſhall I employ myſelf for God this day? What buſineſs is to be done, and in what order? What opportunities may I expect, either of doing, or of receiving good? What temptations am I like to be aſſaulted with, in any place, company, or circumſtances, which may probably occur? In what inſtances have I lately failed? And how ſhall I be ſafeſt now?'

§. 8. After this review, it will be proper to offer up a ſhort prayer, begging, that God would quicken us to each of theſe foreſeen Duties, that he would fortify us againſt each of theſe apprehended dangers; that he would grant us ſucceſs in ſuch or ſuch a buſineſs undertaken for his glory; and alſo that he would help us to diſcover and improve unforeſeen opportunities, to reſiſt unexpected temptations, and to bear patiently, and religiouſly, any afflictions which may ſurprize us in the day on which we are entering.

§. 9. I would adviſe you after this, to read ſome portion of ſcripture; not a great deal, nor the whole bible in its courſe; but ſome ſelect leſſons out of its moſt uſeful parts, perhaps ten or twelve verſes; not troubling yourſelf much about the exact connection, or other critical niceties, which may occur, (tho' at other times I would recommend them to your enquiry, as you have ability and opportunity;) but conſidering them merely in a devotional and practical view.——Here take ſuch inſtructions as readily preſent themſelves to your thoughts, repeat them over to your own conſcience, and charge your heart religiouſly to obſerve them and act upon them, under a ſenſe of the divine authority which attends them. And if you pray over the ſubſtance of this ſcripture, with your bible open before you, it may impreſs your memory and your heart yet more deeply, and may form you to a copiouſneſs and variety, both of thought and expreſſion in prayer.

§. 10. It might be proper to cloſe theſe devotions, with a Pſalm or Hymn: And I rejoice with you, that

thro' the pious care of Dr. Watts, and ſome other ſacred poets, we are provided with ſo rich a variety for the aſſiſtance of the cloſet and family on theſe occaſions, as well as for the ſervice of the ſanctuary.

§. 11. [II.] The moſt material directions which have occurred to me, relating to the progreſs of the day, are theſe:——That we be ſerious in the devotions of the day;—That we be diligent in the buſineſs of it, that is, in the proſecution of our worldly callings;—that we be temperate and prudent in the recreations of it;—that we carefully remark the providences of the day;—that we cautiouſly guard againſt the temptations of it;—that we keep up a lively and humble dependance upon the divine influence, ſuitable to every emergency of it;—that we govern our thoughts well in the ſolitude of the day,—and our diſcourſes well in the converſations of it. Theſe, Sir, were the heads of a ſermon which you lately heard me preach on this occaſion, and to which I know you referred in that requeſt which I am now endeavouring to anſwer. I will therefore touch upon the moſt material hints, which fell under each of theſe particulars.

§. 12. (1.) For ſerioufneſs in devotion, whether public or domeſtic: Let us take a few moments, before we enter upon ſuch ſolemnites, to pauſe, and reflect, on the perfections of the God we are addreſſing to, on the importance of the buſineſs we are coming about, on the pleaſure and advantage of a regular and devout attendance, and on the guilt and folly of an hypocritical formality. When engaged, let us maintain a ſtrict watchfulneſs over our own ſpirits, and check the firſt wanderings of thought. And when the duty is over, let us immediately reflect on the manner in which it has been performed, and aſk our own conſciences whether we have reaſon to conclude, that we are accepted of God in it? For there is a certain manner of going thro' theſe offices, which our own hearts will immediately tell us, it is impoſſible for God to approve: And if we have inadvertently fallen into it, we ought to be deeply humbled before God for it, leſt our prayer become ſin (b).

§. 13. (2.) As for the hours of worldly buſineſs, whether

(b) Pſalm cix. 7.

whether it be, as with you, that of the hands; or whether it be the labour of a learned life, not immediately relating to religious matters: Let us ſet to the proſecution of it with a ſenſe of God's authority, and with a regard to his glory. Let us avoid a dreaming, ſluggiſh, indolent temper, which nods over its work, and does only the buſineſs of an hour in two or three. In oppoſition to this, which runs thro' the the life of ſome people, who yet think they are never idle, let us endeavour to diſpatch as much as we well can in a little time; conſidering, that it is but a little we have in all. And let us be habitually ſenſible of the need we have of the divine bleſſing, to make our labours ſucceſsful.

§. 14. (3.) For ſeaſons of diverſion: Let us take care, that our recreations be well choſen; that they be purſued with a good intention, to fit us for a renewed application to the labours of life; and thus, that they be only uſed in ſubordination to the honour of God, the great end of all our actions. Let us take heed, that our hearts be not eſtranged from God by them; and that they do not take up too much of our time: Always remembring, that the faculties of the human nature, that the advantages of the chriſtian revelation, were not given us in vain; but that we are always to be in purſuit of ſome great and honourable end, and to indulge ourſelves in amuſements and diverſions no farther, than as they may make a part in a ſcheme of rational and manly, benevolent and pious conduct.

§. 15. (4.) For the obſervation of providences: It will be uſeful to regard the divine interpoſition, in our comforts and in our afflictions. In our comforts, whether more common or extraordinary: That we find ourſelves in continued health; that we are furniſhed with food for ſupport and pleaſure; that we have ſo many agreeable ways of employing our time; that we have ſo many friends, and thoſe ſo good, and ſo happy; that our buſineſs goes on proſperouſly; that we go out and come in ſafely; and that we enjoy compoſure and chearfulneſs of ſpirit, without which nothing elſe could be enjoyed:

All theſe ſhould be regarded as providential favours, and due acknowledgments ſhould be made to God on theſe accounts, as we paſs thro' ſuch agreeable ſcenes. On the other hand, providence is to be regarded in every diſappointment, in every loſs, in every pain, in every inſtance of unkindneſs from thoſe who have profeſſed friendſhip: And we ſhould endeavour to argue ourſelves into a patient ſubmiſſion, from this conſideration, that the hand of God is always mediately, if not immediately in each of them; and that if they are not properly the work of providence, they are at leaſt under its direction. It is a reflection, which we ſhould particularly make with relation to thoſe little croſs accidents, (as we are ready to call them,) and thoſe infirmities and follies in the temper and conduct of our intimate friends, which elſe may be ready to diſcompoſe us. And it is the more neceſſary to guard our minds here, as wiſe and good men often loſe the command of themſelves on theſe comparatively little occaſions; who calling up reaſon and religion to their aſſiſtance, ſtand the ſhock of great calamities with fortitude and reſolution.

§. 16. (5). For watchfulneſs againſt temptations: It is neceſſary, when changing our place, or our employment, to reflect, 'What ſnares attend me here?' And as this ſhould be our habitual care, ſo we ſhould eſpecially guard againſt thoſe ſnares which in the morning we foreſaw. And when we are entring on thoſe circumſtances in which we expected the aſſault, we ſhould reflect, eſpecially if it be a matter of great importance, 'now the combat is going to begin: Now God and the bleſſed angels are obſerving, what conſtancy, what fortitude there is in my ſoul; and how far the divine authority, and the remembrance of my own prayers and reſolutions, will weigh with me, when it comes to a trial.'

§. 17. (6.) As for dependance on divine grace for influence; it muſt be univerſal: And ſince we always need it, we muſt never forget that neceſſity. A moment ſpent in humble fervent breathings after the communications of the divine aſſiſtance may do more good, than many minutes ſpent in mere reaſonings: And tho' indeed

deed this ſhould not be neglected, ſince the light of reaſon is a kind of divine illumination; yet ſtill it ought to be purſued in a due ſenſe of our dependance on the father of lights, or where we think ourſelves wiſeſt, we may become vain in our imagination (c). Let us therefore always call upon God; and ſay, for inſtance, when we are going to pray, 'Lord, fix my attention! awaken my holy affections, and pour out upon me the ſpirit of grace and of ſupplication (d)! When taking up the bible, or any other good book, 'open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law (e)!' enlighten mine underſtanding! warm my heart! may my good reſolutions be confirmed, and all the courſe of my life in a proper manner regulated! when addreſſing ourſelves to any worldly buſineſs, 'Lord, proſper thou the work of mine hands upon me (f), and give thy bleſſing to my honeſt endeavours! when going to any kind of recreation, Lord, bleſs my refreſhments! let me not forget thee in them, but ſtill keep thy glory in view! when coming into company, Lord, may I do, and get good! 'let no corrupt communication proceed out of my mouth, but that which is good to uſe of edifying, that it may miniſter grace to the hearers (g)!' when entring upon difficulties, Lord give me 'that wiſdom, which is profitable to direct (h)! teach me thy way, and lead me in a plain path (i)' when encountering with temptations, 'let thy ſtrength, O gracious redeemer, be made perfect in my weakneſs (k)!' theſe inſtances may illuſtrate the deſign of this direction, tho' they be far from a compleat enumeration of all the circumſtances in which it is to be regarded.

§. 18. (7.) For the government of our thoughts in ſolitude: Let us accuſtom ourſelves, on all occaſions, to exerciſe a due command over our thoughts. Let us take care of thoſe entanglements of paſſion, and thoſe attachments to any preſent intereſt and view, which would deprive us of our power over them. Let us ſet before us

(c) Rom. i. 21. 22. (d) Zech. xii. 10. (e) Pſal. cxix. 18. (f) Pſal. xc. 17. (g) Eph. iv. 29. [h] Eccl. x. 10. (i) Pſal. xxvii. 11. [k] 2 Cor. xii. 9.

ſome profitable ſubject of thought: Such as, the perfections of the bleſſed God, the love of Chriſt, the value of time, the certainty and importance of death and judgment, and the eternity of happineſs or miſery which is to follow. Let us alſo at ſuch intervals reflect, on what we have obſerved as to the ſtate of our own ſouls, with regard to the advance or decline of religion; or on the laſt ſermon we have heard, or the laſt portion of ſcripture we have read. You may perhaps, in this connection, Sir, recollect what I have (if I remember right,) propoſed to you in converſation: that it might be very uſeful to ſelect ſome one verſe of ſcripture, which we had met with in the morning, and to treaſure it up in our mind, reſolving to think of that at any time when we are at a loſs for matter of pious reflection, in any intervals of leiſure for entering upon it. This will often be as a ſpring, from whence many profitable and delightful thoughts may ariſe, which perhaps we did not before ſee in that connection and force. Or if it ſhould not be ſo, yet I am perſuaded it will be much better to repeat the ſame ſcripture in our mind an hundred times in a day, with ſome pious ejaculation formed upon it, than to leave our thoughts at the mercy of all thoſe various trifles, which may otherwiſe intrude upon us; the variety of which will be far from making amends for their vanity.

§. 19. (8.) Laſtly, for the government of our diſcourſe in company: We ſhould take great care, that nothing may eſcape us, which can expoſe us, or our chriſtian profeſſion, to cenſure and reproach: Nothing injurious to thoſe that are abſent, or to thoſe that are preſent; nothing malignant, nothing inſincere; nothing which may corrupt, nothing which may provoke, nothing which may miſlead thoſe about us. Nor ſhould we, by any means, be content, that what we ſay is innocent: it ſhould be our deſire, that it may be edifying, to ourſelves and others. In this view, we ſhould endeavour to have ſome ſubject of uſeful diſcourſe always ready; in which we may be aſſiſted by the hints given, about furniture for thought, under the former head. We ſhould watch for decent opportunities of introducing uſeful reflections; and

and if a pious friend attempt to do it, we should endeavour to second it immediately. When the conversation does not turn directly on religious subjects, we should endeavour to make it improving some other way: We should reflect on the character and capacities of our company, that we may lead them to talk of what they understand best; for their discourses on those subjects will probably be most pleasing to themselves, as well as most useful to us. And in pauses of discourse, it may not be improper to lift up an holy ejaculation to God, that his grace may assist us and our friends in our endeavours to do good to each other; that all we say, and do, may be worthy the character of reasonable creatures and of christians.

§. 20. [III.] The directions for a religious closing of the day, which I shall here mention, are only two.—Let us see to it, that the secret duties of the evening, be well performed;———and let us ly down on our beds in a pious frame.

§. 21. (1.) For secret devotion in the evening, I would propose a method something different from that in the morning; but still, as then, with due allowances for circumstances, which may make unthought of alterations proper. I should, Sir, advise to read a portion of scripture in the first place, with suitable reflections, and prayer, as above: Then to read a hymn, or psalm: After this to enter on self-examination, to be followed by a longer prayer, than that which followed reading, to be formed on this review of the day. In this address to the throne of grace it will be highly proper, to intreat that God would pardon the omissions and offences of the day; to praise him for mercies temporal and spiritual; to recommend ourselves to his protection for the ensuing night; with proper petitions for others, whom we ought to bear on our hearts before him; and particularly, for those friends with whom we have conversed or corresponded, in the preceeding day. Many other concerns will occur, both in the morning and evening prayer, which I have not here hinted at; but I did not apprehend, that a full enumeration

enumeration of these things belonged, by any means, to our present purpose.

§. 22. Before I quit this head, I must take the liberty to remind you, that self-examination is so important a duty, that it will be worth our while to spend a few words upon it. And this branch of it is so easy, that when we have proper questions before us, any person of a common understanding may hope to go thro' it with advantage under the divine blessing. I offer you therefore the following queries, which I hope you will, with such alterations as you may judge requisite, keep near you for daily use——"Did I awake as with God this morning, and rise with a grateful sense of his goodness? How were the secret devotions of the morning performed? Did I offer my solemn praises, and renew the dedication of myself to God, with becoming attention and suitable affections? Did I lay my scheme for the business of the day wisely and well? How did I read the scripture, and any other devotional or practical piece, which I might afterwards conveniently review? Did it do my heart good or was it a mere amusement?——How have the other stated devotions of the day been attended, whether in the family or in public? Have I pursued the common business of the day with diligence and spirituality; doing every thing in season, and with all convenient dispatch, and as unto the Lord (l)? What time have I lost this day, in the morning or the forenoon, in the afternoon, or the evening? (for these divisions will assist your recollection;) 'and what has occasioned the loss of it? With what temper, and under what regulations, have the recreations of this day been pursued? Have I seen the hand of God in my mercies, health, chearfulness, food, clothing, books, preservation in journies, success of business, conversation and kindness of friends, &c.? Have I seen it in afflictions, and particularly in little things which had a tendency to vex and disquiet me? And with regard to this interposition, have I received my comforts thankfully, and my afflictions submissively? How have I guarded

(l) Col. iii. 23.

ed againſt the temptations of the day, particularly againſt this or that temptation, which I foreſaw in the morning? Have I maintained an humble dependance on divine influences? Have I lived by faith in the Son of God (m), and regarded Chriſt this day, as my teacher and governor, my atonement and interceſſor, my example and guardian, my ſtrength and forerunner? Have I been looking forward to death and eternity this day, and conſidered myſelf as a probationer for heaven, and thro' grace an expectant of it? Have I governed my thoughts well eſpecially in ſuch or ſuch an interval of ſolitude? How was my ſubject of thought this day choſen, and how was it regarded? Have I governed my diſcourſes well in ſuch and ſuch company? Did I ſay nothing paſſionate, miſchievous, ſlanderous, imprudent, impertinent? Has my heart this day been full of love to God, and to all mankind; and have I ſought, and found, and improved opportunities of doing and of getting good? With what attention and improvement have I read the ſcripture this evening? How was ſelf-examination performed the laſt night; and how have I profited this day by any remarks I then made on former negligences and miſtakes? With what temper did I then lie down, and compoſe myſelf?"

§. 23. You will eaſily ſee, Sir, that theſe queſtions are ſo adjuſted, as to be an abridgment of the moſt material advices I have given in this letter; and I believe I need not, to a perſon of your underſtanding, ſay any thing as to the uſefulneſs of ſuch enquiries. Conſcience will anſwer them in a few minutes; but if you think them too large and particular, you may make a ſtill ſhorter abſtract for daily uſe, and reſerve theſe, with ſuch obvious alterations as will then be neceſſary, for ſeaſons of more than ordinary exactneſs in review, which I hope will occur at leaſt once a week. Secret devotion being thus performed, before drowſineſs render us unfit for it, the interval between that and our going to reſt muſt be conducted by the rules mentioned under the next head. And nothing will farther remain to be conſidered here, but

§. 24.

§. 24. (2.) The ſentiments, with which we ſhould lie down, and compoſe ourſelves to ſleep. Now here it is obviouſly ſuitable, to think of the divine goodneſs, in adding another day, and the mercies of it to the former days and mercies of our life; to take notice of the indulgence of providence, in giving us commodious habitations and eaſy beds, and continuing to us ſuch health of body, that we can lay ourſelves down at eaſe upon them, and ſuch ſerenity of mind as leaves us any room to hope for refreſhing ſleep: A refreſhment to be ſought not merely as an indulgence to animal nature, but as what our wiſe Creator, in order to keep us humble in the midſt of ſo many infirmities, has been pleaſed to make neceſſary to our being able to purſue his ſervice with renewed alacrity. Thus may our ſleeping, as well as our waking hours, be in ſome ſenſe devoted to God. And when we are juſt going to reſign ourſelves to the image of death, (to what one of the ancients beautifully calls its leſſer myſteries,) it is alſo evidently proper to think ſeriouſly of that end of all the living, and to renew thoſe actings of repentance and faith which we ſhould judge neceſſary, if we were to wake no more here. You have once, Sir, ſeen a meditation of that kind in my hand: I will tranſcribe it for you in the poſtſcript; and therefore ſhall add no more to this head but here put a cloſe to the directions you deſired.

§. 25. I am perſuaded, the moſt important of them have, in one form or another, been long regarded by you, and made governing maxims of your life. I ſhall greatly rejoice, if the review of theſe, and the examination and trial of the reſt, may be a means of leading you into more intimate communion with God, and ſo of rendering your life more pleaſant and uſeful, and your eternity, whenever that is to commence, more glorious. There is not a human creature upon earth, whom I ſhould not delight to ſerve in theſe important intereſts; but I can faithfully aſſure you, that I am with particular reſpect,

Dear Sir,

Your very affectionate friend & ſervant

§. 26.

§. 26. This, reader, with the alteration of a very few words, is the letter I wrote to a worthy friend, (now, I doubt not, with God,) about sixteen years ago: And I can assuredly say, that the experience of each of these years has confirmed me in these views and established me in the persuasion, 'that one day thus spent is preferable to whole years of sensuality, and the neglect of religion." I chose to insert the letter as it is, because I thought the freedom and particularity of the advice I had given in it, would appear most natural in its original form: And as I propose to inforce these advices in the next chapter, I shall conclude this with that meditation, which I promised my friend as a postscript; and which I could wish you, to make so familiar to yourself, as that you might be able to recollect the substance of it, whenever you compose yourself to sleep.

A serious View of Death, *proper to be taken as we lie down on our Beds.*

"OH my soul, look forward a little with seriousness and attention, and learn wisdom by the consideration of thy latter end (n). Another of thy mortal days is now numbered and finished: And as I have put off my clothes, and laid myself upon my bed, for the repose of the night; so will the day of life quickly come to its period, so must the body itself be put off, and laid to its repose in a bed of dust. There let it rest; for it will be no more regarded by me, than the clothes which I have now laid aside. I have another far more important concern to attend. Think, Oh my soul, when death comes, thou art to enter upon the eternal world, and to be fixed either in heaven or in hell. All the schemes and cares, and hopes and fears, the pleasures and sorrows of life, will come to their period, and the world of spirits will open upon thee. And Oh, how soon may it open! Perhaps before the returning sun bring on the light of another day. To-morrow's sun may not enlighten mine eyes, but

(n) Deut. xxii. 29.

but only ſhine round a ſenſeleſs corpſe, which may lie in the place of this animated body: At leaſt the death of many in the flower of their age, and many who were ſuperior in capacity, piety, and the proſpects of uſefulneſs, may loudly warn me not to depend on a long life, and engage me rather to wonder that I am continued here ſo many years, than to be ſurprized if I am ſpeedily removed.

"And now, Oh my ſoul, anſwer as in the ſight of God; Art thou ready? Art thou ready? Is there no ſin unforſaken, and ſo unrepented of, to fill me with anguiſh in my departing moments, and to make me tremble on the brink of eternity? Dread to remain under the guilt of it, and renew thy moſt earneſt applications to the mercy of God, and the blood of a Redeemer, for deliverance from it.

"But if the great account be already adjuſted, if thou haſt cordially repented of thy numerous offences, if thou haſt ſincerely committed thyſelf by faith into the hands of the Bleſſed Jeſus, and haſt not renounced thy covenant with him by returning to the allowed practice of ſin, then ſtart not at the thoughts of a ſeparation; it is not in the power of death to hurt a ſoul devoted to God, and united to the great Redeemer. It may take me from my worldly comforts; it may diſconcert and break my ſchemes for ſervice on earth: But, Oh my ſoul, diviner entertainments, and nobler ſervices wait thee beyond the grave. For ever bleſſed be the name of God and the love of Jeſus, for theſe quieting, encouraging, joyful views! I will now lay me down in peace, and ſleep (o); free from the fears of what ſhall be the iſſue of this night, whether life or death ſhall be appointed for me. Father into thine hands I commend my ſpirit (p); for thou haſt redeemed me, O God of truth (q), and therefore I can chearfully refer it to thy choice, whether I ſhall wake, in this world, or another.

CHAP.

(o) Pſal. iv. 8. (p) Luke xxiii. 46. (q) Pſal. xxxi. 5.

CHAP. XX.

A ſerious Perſuaſive to ſuch a Method of ſpending our Days, as is repreſented in the former Chapter.

Chriſtians fix their views too low, and indulge too indolent a diſpoſition, which makes it more neceſſary to urge ſuch a life, as that under conſideration. §. 1. 2. *It is therefore inforced,* (1.) *From its being apparently reaſonable, conſidering ourſelves as the creatures of God, and as redeemed by the blood of Chriſt,* §. 3. (2.) *From its evident tendency to conduce to our comfort in life.* §. 4. (3.) *From the influence it will have to promote our uſefulneſs to others.* §. 5. (4.) *From its efficacy to make afflictions lighter.* §. 6. (5.) *From its happy aſpect on death:* §. 7, *And,* (6.) *On eternity.* §. 8. *Whereas not to deſire improvement would argue a ſoul deſtitute of religion.* §. 9. *A prayer ſuited to the ſtate of a ſoul, who longs to attain the life recommended above.*

§. 1. I HAVE been aſſigning, in the preceeding chapter, what I fear will ſeem to ſome of my readers ſo hard a taſk, that they will want courage to attempt it; and indeed it is a life in many reſpects ſo far above that of the generality of chriſtians, that I am not without apprehenſions, that many, who deſerve the name, may think the directions, after all the precautions with which I have propoſed them, are carried to an unneceſſary degree of nicety and ſtrictneſs. But I am perſuaded, much of the credit and comfort of chriſtianity is loſt, in conſequence of its profeſſors fixing their aims too low, and not conceiving of their high and holy calling in ſo elevated and ſublime a view, as the nature of religion would require, and the word of God would direct, I am fully convinced, that the expreſſions of walking with God, of being in the fear of the Lord all

the day long (a), and, above all, that of loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and ſoul, and mind, and ſtrength (b), muſt require, if not all theſe circumſtances, yet the ſubſtance of all that I have been recommending, ſo far as we have capacity, leiſure, and opportunity; And I cannot but think, that many might command more of the latter, and perhaps improve their capacities too, if they would take a due care in the government of themſelves; if they would give up vain and unneceſſary diverſions, and certain indulgences, which only ſuit and delight the lower part of our nature, and (to ſay the beſt of them) deprive us of pleaſures much better than themſelves, if they do not plunge us into guilt. Many of theſe rules would appear eaſily practicable, if men would learn to know the value of time, and particularly to redeem it from unneceſſary ſleep, which waſtes many golden hours of the day: Hours in which many of God's ſervants are delighting themſelves in him, and drinking in full draughts of the water of life, while theſe their brethren are ſlumbering upon their beds, and loſt in vain dreams, as far below the common entertainments of a rational creature, as the pleaſures of the ſublimeſt devotion are above them.

§. 2. I know likewiſe, that the mind is very fickle and inconſtant; and that it is a hard thing to preſerve ſuch a government and authority over our thoughts, as would be very deſireable, and as the plan I have laid down will require. But ſo much of the honour of God, and ſo much of our own true happineſs, depends upon it, that I beg you will give me a patient and attentive hearing while I am pleading with you, and that you will ſeriouſly examine the arguments, and then judge, whether a a care and conduct like that which I have adviſed, be not in itſelf reaſonable; and whether it will not be highly conducive to your comfort and uſefulneſs in life, your peace in death, and the advancement and increaſe of your eternal glory.

§. 3. Let conſcience ſay, whether ſuch a life, as I have deſcribed above, be not in itſelf highly reaſonable. Look over

(a) Prov. xxiii. 17. (b) Mark xii. 30.

over the ſubſtance of it again, and bring it under a cloſe examination; for I am very apprehenſive, that ſome weak objections may ariſe againſt the whole, which may in their conſequences affect particulars againſt which no reaſonable man would preſume to make any objections at all. Recollect, O chriſtian, and carry it with you in your memory and your heart, while you are purſuing this review, that you are the creature of God, that you are purchaſed with the blood of Jeſus; and then ſay, Whether theſe relations in which you ſtand, do not demand all that application and reſolution which I would engage you to. Suppoſe all the counſels I have given, reduced into practice: Suppoſe every day begun and concluded with ſuch devout breathings after God, and ſuch holy retirements for morning and evening converſe with him and with your own heart: Suppoſe a daily care, in contriving how your time may be managed, and in reflecting how it has been employed: Suppoſe this regard to God, this ſenſe of his preſence, and zeal for his glory, to run thro' your acts of worſhip, your hours of buſineſs and recreation: Suppoſe this attention to providence, this guard againſt temptations, this dependence upon divine influence, this government of the thoughts in ſolitude, and of the diſcourſes in company: Nay, I will add farther, ſuppoſe every particular direction given, to be purſued, excepting when particular caſes occur, with reſpect to which you ſhall be able in conſcience to ſay. "I wave it, not from indolence and careleſſneſs, but becauſe I think it will be juſt now more pleaſing to God to be doing ſomething elſe;" which may often happen in human life, where general rules are beſt concerted: Suppoſe, I ſay, all this to be done, not for a day, or a week, but thro' the remainder of life, whether longer or ſhorter; and ſuppoſe this to be reviewed at the cloſe of life, in the full exerciſe of your rational faculties: Will there be reaſon to ſay in the reflection, "I have taken too much pains in religion; The author of my being did not deſerve all this from me: Leſs diligence, leſs fidelity, leſs zeal than this, might have been an equivalent

for the blood which was ſhed for my redemption. A part of my heart, a part of my time, a part of my labours, might have ſufficed for him, who hath given me all my powers; for him who hath delivered me from that deſtruction, which would have made them my everlaſting torment; for him who is raiſing me to the regions of a bliſsful immortality." Can you with any face ſay this? If you cannot, then ſurely your conſcience bears witneſs, that all I have recommended under the limitations above, is reaſonable; that duty and gratitude require it; and conſequently, that by every allowed failure in it, you bring guilt upon your own ſoul, you offend God, and act unworthy your chriſtian profeſſion.

§. 4. I intreat you farther to conſider, Whether ſuch a conduct as I have now been recommending, would not conduce much to your comfort and uſefulneſs in life. Reflect ſeriouſly, what is true happineſs? Does it conſiſt in diſtance from God, or in nearneſs to him? Surely you cannot be a chriſtian, ſurely you cannot be a rational man, if you doubt, whether communion with the great Father of our ſpirits be a pleaſure and felicity: And if it be, then ſurely they enjoy moſt of it, who keep him moſt conſtantly in view. You cannot but know in your own conſcience, that it is this which makes the happineſs of heaven; and therefore the more of it any man enjoys upon earth, the more of heaven comes down into his ſoul. If you have made any trial of religion, tho' it be but a few months or weeks ſince you firſt became acquainted with it, you muſt be ſome judge of it upon your own experience, which have been the moſt pleaſant days of your life. Have they not been thoſe, in which you have acted moſt upon theſe principles; thoſe, in which you have moſt ſteadily and reſolutely carried them thro' every hour of time, and every circumſtance of life? The check, which you muſt in many inſtances give to your own inclinations might ſeem diſagreeable; but it would ſurely be overbalanced in a moſt happy manner, by the ſatisfaction you would find in a conſciouſneſs of ſelf-government;

ment; in having ſuch a command of your thoughts, affections, and actions as is much more glorious than any authority over others can be.

§. 5. I would alſo intreat you to conſider the influence, which ſuch a conduct as this might have upon the happineſs of others. And it is eaſy to be ſeen, it muſt be very great; as you would find your heart always diſpoſed to watch every opportunity of doing good, and to ſeize it with eagerneſs and delight. It would engage you to make it the ſtudy and buſineſs of your life, to order things in ſuch a manner that the end of one kind and uſeful action might be the beginning of another; in which you would go on as naturally, as the inferior animals do in thoſe productions and actions by which mankind are relieved or inriched; or as the earth bears her ſucceſſive crops of different vegetable ſupplies. And tho' mankind be, in this corrupt ſtate, ſo unhappily inclined to imitate evil examples rather than good; yet it may be expected, that while your light ſhines before men, ſome ſeeing your good works, will endeavour to tranſcribe them in their own lives, and ſo to glorify your Father which is in heaven (c). The charm of ſuch beautiful models would ſurely impreſs ſome, and incline them at leaſt to attempt an imitation; and every attempt would diſpoſe to another. And thus, thro' the divine goodneſs, you might be entituled to a ſhare in the praiſe, and the reward, not only of the good you had immediately done yourſelf, but likewiſe of that which you had engaged others to do. And no eye, but that of an all-ſearching God, can ſee, into what diſtant times or places the bleſſed conſequences may reach. In every inſtance in which theſe conſequences appear, it will put a generous and ſublime joy into your heart, which no worldly proſperity could afford, and which would be the livelieſt emblem of that high delight which the bleſſed God feels, in ſeeing and making his creatures happy.

§. 6. It is true indeed, that, amidſt all theſe pious and benevolent cares, afflictions may come, and in ſome

(c) Mat. v. 6.

meaſure interrupt you in the midſt of your projected ſchemes. But ſurely theſe afflictions will ſit much lighter, when your heart is gladdened with the peaceful and joyful reflections of your own mind, and with ſo honourable a teſtimony of conſcience before God and man: Delightful will it be, to go back to paſt ſcenes in your pleaſing review, and to think, that you have not only been ſincerely humbling yourſelf for thoſe paſt offences, which afflictions may bring to your remembrance; but that you have given ſubſtantial proofs of the ſincerity of that humiliation, by a real reformation of what has been amiſs, and by acting with ſtrenuous and vigorous reſolution on the contrary principle. And while converſe with God, and doing good to men, are made the great buſineſs and pleaſure of life, you will find a thouſand opportunities of enjoyment; even in the midſt of thoſe afflictions, which would render you ſo incapable of reliſhing the pleaſures of ſenſe, that the very mention of them might in thoſe circumſtances ſeem an inſult and a reproach.

§. 7. At length, death will come; that ſolemn and important hour, which hath been paſſed through by ſo many thouſands who have in the main lived ſuch a life, and by ſo many millions who have neglected it. And let conſcience ſay, if there was ever one of all theſe millions, who had then any reaſon to rejoice in that neglect; or any one, among the moſt ſtrict and exemplary chriſtians, who then lamented that his heart and life had been too zealouſly devoted to God? Let conſcience ſay, whether they have wiſhed to have a part of that time, which they have thus employed, given back to them again, that they might be more conformed to this world; that they might plunge themſelves deeper into its amuſements, or purſue its honours, its poſſeſſions, or its pleaſures, with greater eagerneſs than they had done? If you were yourſelf dying, and a dear friend or child ſtood near you, and this book and the laſt chapter of it ſhould chance to come into your thoughts, would you caution that friend or child againſt conducting himſelf by ſuch rules as I have advanced?

The

The queſtion may perhaps ſeem unneceſſary, where the anſwer is ſo plain and ſo certain. Well then, let me beſeech you, to learn how you ſhould live, by reflecting how you would die, and what a courſe you would wiſh to look back upon, when you are juſt quitting this world, and entering upon another. Think ſeriouſly; what if death ſhould ſurprize you on a ſudden, and you ſhould be called into eternity at an hour's or a minute's warning, would you not wiſh, that your Lord ſhould find you engaged in ſuch thoughts, and in ſuch purſuits! Would not the paſſage, the flight from earth to heaven, be moſt eaſy, moſt pleaſant, in this view and connection? And on the other hand, if death ſhould make more gradual approaches, would not the remembrance of ſuch a pious, holy, humble, diligent, and uſeful life, make a dying bed much ſofter and eaſier, than it would otherwiſe be? You would die, depending upon theſe things: God forbid, that you ſhould! Senſible of your many imperfections, you would, no doubt, deſire to throw yourſelf at the feet of Chriſt, that you might appear before God, adorned with his righteouſneſs, and waſhed from your ſins in his blood. You would alſo with your dying breath aſcribe to the riches of his grace every good diſpoſition you had found in your heart, and every worthy action you had been enabled to perform. But would it not give you a delight worthy of being purchaſed with ten thouſand worlds, to reflect, that his grace beſtowed upon you had not been in vain (d); but that you had from an humble principle of grateful love, glorified your heavenly Father on earth, and in ſome degree, tho' not with the perfection you could deſire, finiſhed the work which he had given you to do (e): That you had been living for many paſt years as on the borders of heaven, and endeavouring to form your heart and life to the temper and manners of its inhabitants.

§. 8. And once more, let me intreat you to reflect on the view you will have of this matter, when you come into a world of glory, if (which I hope will be the

(d) 1 Cor. xv. 10. (e) John. xvii. 4.

the happy caſe,) divine mercy conduct you thither. Will not your reception there be affected by your care, or negligence, in this holy courſe? Will it appear an indifferent thing in the eye of the bleſſed Jeſus, who diſtributes the crowns, and allots the thrones there, whether you have been among the moſt zealous, or the moſt indolent of his ſervants? ſurely you muſt wiſh, to have an entrance adminiſtered unto you abundantly, into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour (f): And what can more certainly conduce to it than to be always abounding in his work (g)? You cannot think ſo meanly of that glorious ſtate, as to imagine, that you ſhall there look round about with a ſecret diſappointment, and ſay in your heart, that you overvalued the inheritance you have received, and purſued it with too much earneſtneſs. You will not ſurely complain, that it had too many of your thoughts and cares: But on the contrary, you have the higheſt reaſon to believe, that if any thing were capable of exciting your indignation and your grief there, it would be, that, amidſt ſo many motives, and ſo many advantages, you exerted yourſelf no more in the proſecution of ſuch a prize.

§. 9. But I will not enlarge on ſo clear a caſe, and therefore conclude the chapter with reminding you, That to allow yourſelf deliberately to ſit down ſatisfied with any imperfect attainments in religion, and to look upon a more confirmed and improved ſtate of it as what you do not deſire, nay, as what you ſecretly reſolve that you will not purſue, is one of the moſt fatal ſigns we can well imagine, that you are an entire ſtranger to the firſt principles of it.

A Prayer *ſuited to the ſtate of a ſoul, who deſires to attain the life recommended above.*

"BLESSED GOD, I cannot contradict the force of theſe reaſonings: Oh that I might feel more than ever the laſting effects of them! Thou art the great fountain of being, and of happineſs; and as from thee my

[f] 2 Pet. i. 11. [g] 1 Cor. xv. 58.

my being was derived, ſo from thee my happineſs directly flows; and the nearer I am to thee, the purer and the more delicious is the ſtream. With thee is the fountain of life; in thy light may I ſee light (h)! The great object of my final hope is to dwell for ever with thee. Give me now ſome foretaſte of that delight! Give me, I beſeech thee to experience the bleſſedneſs of that man who feareth the Lord, and who delighteth greatly in his commandments (i); and ſo form my heart by thy grace, that I may be in the fear of the Lord all the day long (k)!

"To thee may my awakening thoughts be directed; and with the firſt ray of light that viſits mine opening eyes, lift up, O Lord, thy light of thy countenance upon me, (l)! When my faculties are rouſed from that broken ſtate, in which they lay, while buried, and as it were annihilated, in ſleep, may my firſt actions be conſecrated to thee, O God, who giveſt me light; who giveſt me, as it were, every morning a new life and a new reaſon! enable my heart to pour itſelf out before thee, with a filial reverence, freedom and endearment! And may I hearken to God, as I deſire that he ſhould hearken unto me! May thy word be read with attention and pleaſure! may my ſoul be delivered into the mold of it, and may I hide it in mine heart that, I may not ſin againſt thee (m)! Animated by the great motives there ſuggeſted, may I every morning be renewing the dedication of myſelf to thee, thro' Jeſus thy beloved Son; and be deriving from him new ſupplies of that bleſſed ſpirit of thine, whoſe influences are the life of my ſoul!

"And being thus prepared, do thou, Lord, lead me forth by the hand to all the duties and events of the day! in that calling, wherein thou haſt been pleaſed to call me, may I abide with thee (n); not being ſlothful in buſineſs, but fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord (o)! may I know the value of time, and always improve it to the beſt advantage, in ſuch duties as thou has aſſigned me; how low

[h] Pſal. xxxvi. 9. [i] Pſal. cxii. 1. [k] Prov. xxiii. 17. [l] Pſal. iv. 6. [m] Pſal. cxix. 11. [n] 1 Cor. vii. 20. [o] Rom. xii. 11.

low ſoever they may ſeem, or how painful ſoever they may be! to thy glory, O Lord, may the labours of life be purſued; and to thy glory may the refreſhments of it be ſought! whether I eat, or drink, or whatever I do (p) may that end be ſtill kept in view, and may it be attained; and may every refreſhment, and releaſe from buſineſs, prepare me to ſerve thee with greater vigour and reſolution!

"May mine eye be watchful to obſerve the deſcent of mercies from thee; and may a grateful ſenſe of thine hand in them add a ſavour and a reliſh to all! and when afflictions come, which in a world like this I would accuſtom myſelf to expect, may I remember that they come from thee; and may that fully reconcile me to them, while I firmly believe, that the ſame love which gives us our daily bread, appoints us our daily croſſes; which I would learn to take up, that I may follow my dear Lord (q,) with a temper like that which he manifeſted, when aſcending Calvary for my ſake; ſaying like him, the cup which my father hath given me, ſhall I not drink it (r)? And when I enter into temptation, do thou, Lord, deliver me from evil (s)! make me ſenſible, I intreat thee, of my own weakneſs, that my heart may be raiſed to thee for preſent communications of proportionable ſtrength! when I am engaged in the ſociety of others, may it be my deſire and care, that I may do, and receive as much good as poſſible; and may I continually anſwer the great purpoſes of life, by honouring thee, and diffuſing uſeful knowledge and happineſs in the world! and when I am alone, may I remember my heavenly father is with me; may I enjoy the pleaſure of thy preſence, and feel the animating power of it, awakening my ſoul to an earneſt deſire to think, and act, as in thy ſight!

"Thus let my days be ſpent: And let them always be cloſed in thy fear, and under a ſenſe of thy gracious preſence! meet me, O Lord, in mine evening retirements! may I chuſe the moſt proper time for them; may

(p) 1 Cor. x. 31. (q) Mark viii. 34. [r] John xviii. 11. (s) Mat. vi. 13.

may I diligently attend to reading and prayer; and when I review my conduct, may I do it with an impartial eye! let not ſelf-love ſpread a falſe colouring over it; but may I judge myſelf, as one that expects to be judged of the Lord, and is very ſolicitous he may be approved by thee, who ſearcheſt all hearts, and canſt not forget any of my works (t)! let my prayer come daily before thee as incenſe, and let the lifting up of my hands be as the morning and the evening ſacrifice (u)! may I reſign my powers to ſleep in ſweet calmneſs and ſerenity, conſcious that I have lived to God in the day, and chearfully perſuaded that I am accepted of thee in Chriſt Jeſus my Lord, and humbly hoping in thy mercy thro' him, whether my days on earth be prolonged, or the reſidue of them be cut off in the midſt (x)! if death comes by a leiſurely advance, may it find me thus employed; and if I am called on a ſudden to exchange worlds may my laſt days and hours be found to have been conducted by ſuch maxims as theſe; that I may have a ſweet and eaſy paſſage from the ſervices of time to the infinitely nobler ſervices of an immortal ſtate! I aſk it thro' him, who while on earth was the faireſt pattern and example of every virtue and grace, and who now lives and reigns with thee, able to ſave unto the uttermoſt (y): To him having done all I would fly, with humble acknowledgment that I am an unprofitable ſervant (z); to him be glory, for ever and ever. *Amen.*"

CHAP.

[t] Amos viii. 7. (u) Pſal. cxli. 2. (x) Iſa. xxxviii. 10. [y] Heb. vii. 25. [z] Luke xvii. 10.

CHAP. XXI.

A Caution againſt various Temptations, by which the young Convert may be drawn aſide from the Courſe recommended above.

Dangers continue, after the firſt difficulties (conſidered Chap. xvi.) *are broken thro'* §. 1. *Particular cautions,* (1.) *Againſt a ſluggiſh and indolent temper.* §. 2. (2.) *Againſt the exceſſive love of ſenſitive pleaſure,* §. 3. *Leading to a neglect of buſineſs and needleſs expence.* § 4. (3.) *Againſt the ſnares of vain company.* §. 5. (4.) *Againſt exceſſive hurries of worldly buſineſs;* §. 6. *Which is inforced by the fatal conſequences theſe have had in many caſes.* §. 7. *The chapter concludes with an exhortation to die to this world and live to another:* §. 8. *And the young convert's prayer for divine protection againſt the dangers ariſing from theſe ſnares.*

§. 1. THE repreſentation I have been making of the pleaſure and advantage of a life ſpent in devotedneſs to God and communion with him, as I have deſcribed it above, will I hope engage you, my dear reader, to form ſome purpoſes, and make ſome attempt to obtain it. But from conſidering the nature and obſerving the courſe of things, it appears exceedingly evident, that beſides the general oppoſition which I formerly mentioned as like to attend you in your firſt entrance on a religious life, you will find, even after you have reſolutely broken thro' this, a variety of hindrances in any attempts of exemplary piety, and in the proſecution of a remarkably ſtrict and edifying courſe, will preſent themſelves daily in your path. And whereas you may, by a few reſolute

reſolute efforts, baffle ſome of the former ſort of enemies; theſe will be perpetually renewing their onſets, and a vigorous ſtruggle muſt be continually maintained among them. Give me leave now therefore, to be particular in my cautions againſt ſome of the chief of them. And here I would inſiſt upon the difficulties, which will ariſe from indolence and the love of pleaſure, from vain company, and from worldly cares. Each of theſe may prove inſnaring to any, and eſpecially to young perſons, to whom I would now have ſome particular regard.

§. 2. I intreat you therefore, in the firſt place, that you would guard againſt a ſluggiſh and indolent temper. The love of eaſe inſinuates itſelf into the heart, under a variety of plauſible pretences, which are often allowed to paſs, when temptations of a groſſer nature would not be admitted. The miſpending a little time ſeems to wiſe and good men but a ſmall matter; yet this ſometimes runs them into great inconveniences.——It often leads them to break in upon the ſeaſons regularly allotted to devotion, and to defer buſineſs, which might immediately be done, but being put off from day to day is not done at all; and thereby the ſervices of life are at leaſt diminiſhed, and the rewards of eternity diminiſhed proportionably: Not to inſiſt upon it, that very frequently this lays the ſoul open to farther temptations, by which it falls, in conſequence of being found unemployed. Be therefore ſuſpicious of the firſt approaches of this kind. Remember, that the ſoul of man is an active being, and that it muſt find its pleaſure in activity. Gird up therefore the loins of your mind (a).———Endeavour to keep yourſelf always well employed. Be exact, if I may with humble reverence uſe the expreſſion, in your appointments with God. Meet him early in the morning; and ſay not with the ſluggard, when the proper hour of riſing is come, a little more ſleep, a little more ſlumber (b).—That time which prudence will adviſe you, give to converſation, and to other recreations. But when that is elapſed, and no unforeſeen and important engagement

(a) 1 Peter i. 13. (b) Prov. vi. 10.

preſents, riſe and be gone. Quit the company of your deareſt friends, and retire to your proper buſineſs, whether it be in the field, the ſhop, or the cloſet. For by acting contrary to the ſecret dictates of your mind, as to what it is juſt at the preſent moment beſt to do, tho' it be but in the manner of ſpending half an hour, ſome degree of guilt is contracted, and a habit is cheriſhed, which may draw after it much worſe conſequences.—Conſider therefore, what duties are to be diſpatched, and in what ſeaſons. Form your plan as prudently as you can, and purſue it reſolutely; unleſs any unexpected incident ariſes, which leads you to conclude, that duty calls you another way. Allowances for ſuch unthought of interruptions muſt be made; but if in conſequence of this, you are obliged to ommit any thing of importance which you propoſed to have done to day, do it if poſſible to morrow: And do not cut yourſelf out new work, till the former plan be diſpatched; unleſs you really judge it, not merely more amuſing, but more important. And always remember that a ſervant of Chriſt ſhould ſee to it, that he determine on theſe occaſions, as in his maſter's preſence.

§. 3. Guard alſo againſt an exceſſive love of ſenſitive and animal pleaſure, as that which will be a great hindrance to you in that religious courſe, which I have now been urging. You cannot but know, that Chriſt has told us, that a man muſt deny himſelf, and take up his croſs daily, if he deſire to become his diſciple (c).—Chriſt the Son of God, the former and heir of all things, pleaſed not himſelf (d); but ſubmitted to want, to difficulties, and hardſhips, in the way of duty, and ſome of them of the extreameſt kind and degree, for the glory of God and the ſalvation of men. In this way we are to follow him; and as we know not how ſoon we may be called, even to reſiſt unto blood, ſtriving againſt ſin (e), it is certainly beſt to accuſtom ourſelves to that diſcipline, which we may be poſſibly called out to exerciſe, even in ſuch rigorous heights. A ſoft and delicate life will give force to temptations, which might eaſily be ſubdued by one,

(c) Luke ix. 23. (d) Rom. xv. 3. (e) Heb. xii. 4.

one, who has habituated himſelf to endure hardſhips as a good ſoldier of Jeſus Chriſt (f).———It alſo produces an attachment to this world, and an unwillingneſs to leave it; which ill become thoſe who are ſtrangers and pilgrims on earth, and who expect ſo ſoon to be called away to that better country which they profeſs to ſeek (g).———Add to this, that what the world calls a life of pleaſure, is neceſſarily a life of expence too, and may perhaps lead you, as it has done many others, and eſpecially many who have been ſetting out in the world, beyond the limits which providence has aſſigned; and ſo after a ſhort courſe of indulgence may produce proportionable want. And while in other caſes it is true, that pity ſhould be ſhown to the poor, this is a poverty that is juſtly contemptible, becauſe it is the effect of a man's own folly; and when your want thus comes upon you as an armed man (h), you will not only find yourſelf ſtripped of the capacity you might otherwiſe have ſecured for performing thoſe works of charity which are ſo ornamental to a chriſtian profeſſion, but probably will be under ſtrong temptations to ſome low artifice or mean compliance, quite beneath the chriſtian character, and that of an upright man. Many who once made a high profeſſion, after a ſeries of ſuch ſorry and ſcandalous ſhifts have fallen into the infamy of bankrupts, and of the worſt kind of bankrupts; I mean ſuch as have laviſhed away on themſelves what was indeed the property of others, and ſo have injured, and perhaps ruined, the induſtrious, to feed a fooliſh, luxurious, or oſtentatious humour, which while indulged was the ſhame of their families, and when it can be indulged no longer is their torment. This will be a terrible reproach to religion: Such a reproach to it, that a good man would rather chuſe to live on bread and water, or indeed to die for want of them, than to occaſion it.

§. 4. Guard therefore, I beſeech you, againſt any thing which might tend that way, eſpecially by diligence in buſineſs, and by prudence and frugality in expence; which by the divine bleſſing, may have a very happy in-

(f) 2 Tim. ii. 3. (g) Heb. xi. 13. 16. (h) Prov. vi. 11.

fluence to make your affairs proſperous, your health vigorous, and your mind eaſy. But this cannot be attained without keeping a reſolute watch over yourſelf, and ſtrenuouſly refuſing to comply with any propoſals, which indolence or ſenſuality will offer in very plauſible forms, and for which it will plead, 'that it aſks but very little.' Take heed, leſt in this reſpect you imitate thoſe fond parents, who by indulging their children in every little thing they have a mind to, encourage them by inſenſible degrees to grow ſtill more incroaching, and imperious in their demands; as if they choſe to be ruined with them, rather than to check them in what ſeems a trifle. Remember, and conſider that excellent remark ſealed by the ruin of ſo many thouſands: 'He that deſpiſeth ſmall things ſhall fall by little and little.'

§. 5. In this view, give me leave alſo ſeriouſly and tenderly to caution you, my dear reader, againſt the ſnares of vain company. I ſpeak not, as before, of that company, which is openly licentious and profane. I hope, there is ſomething now in your temper and views, which would engage you to turn away from ſuch with deteſtation and horror. But I beſeech you to conſider, that thoſe companions may be very dangerous, who might at firſt give you but very little alarm: I mean thoſe who tho' not the declared enemies of religion, and profeſſed followers of vice and diſorder, yet nevertheleſs have no practical ſenſe of divine things on their hearts, ſo far as can be judged by their converſations and behaviour. You muſt often of neceſſity be with ſuch perſons, and chriſtianity not only allows, but requires, that you ſhould, on all expedient occaſions of intercourſe with them, treat them with civility and reſpect: But chuſe not ſuch for your moſt intimate friends, and do not contrive to ſpend moſt of your leiſure moments among them. For ſuch converſe has a ſenſible tendency to alienate the ſoul from God, and to render it unfit for all ſpiritual communion with him. To convince you of this, do but reflect on your experience, when you have been for many hours together among perſons of ſuch a character.

character. Do you not find yourſelf more indiſpoſed for devotional exerciſes? Do you not find your heart, by inſenſible degrees, more and more inclined to a conformity to this world, and to look with a ſecret diſreliſh on thoſe objects and employments, to which reaſon directs as the nobleſt and the beſt? Obſerve the firſt ſymptoms, and guard againſt the ſnare in time: And for this purpoſe, endeavour to form friendſhips, founded in piety, and ſupported by it. Be a companion of them that fear God, and of them that keep his precepts (i). You well know, that in the ſight of God they are the excellent of the earth; let them therefore be all your delight (k).—— And that the peculiar benefit of their friendſhip may not be loſt, endeavour to make the beſt of the hours you ſpend with them. The wiſeſt of men has obſerved, that when counſel in the heart of a man, is like deep water, that is when it lies low and concealed, a man of underſtanding will draw it out (l). Endeavour therefore on ſuch occaſions, ſo far as you can do it with decency and convenience, to give the converſation a religious turn.— And when ſerious and uſeful ſubjects are ſtarted in your preſence, lay hold of them and cultivate them; and for that purpoſe let the word of Chriſt dwell richly in you (m), and be continually made the man of your counſel (n).

§. 6. If it be ſo, it will ſecure you, not only from the ſnares of idleneſs and luxury, but from the contagion of every bad example. And it will alſo engage you to guard againſt thoſe exceſſive hurries of worldly buſineſs, which would fill up all your time and thoughts, and thereby choke the good word of God, and render it in a great meaſure, if not quite unfruitful (o). Young people are generally of an enterprizing diſpoſition: Having experienced comparatively little of the fatigue of buſineſs, and of the diſappointments and incumbrances of life, they eaſily ſwallow them up, and annihilate them in their imagination, and fancy that their ſpirit, their application and addreſs, will be able to encounter and

(i) Pſal cxix. 63. (k) Pſal. xvi. 3. (l) Prov. xx. 5. (m) Col. iii. 16. (n) Pſal. cxix. 24. (o) Mat. xiii. 20.

ſurmount every obſtacle or hindrance. But the event proves it otherwiſe. Let me intreat you therefore, to be cautious, how you plunge yourſelf into a greater variety of buſineſs than you are capable of managing as you ought, that is, in conſiſtency with the care of your ſouls, and the ſervice of God; which certainly ought not on any pretence to be neglected. It is true indeed, that a prudent regard to your worldly intereſt would require ſuch a caution; as it is obvious to every careful obſerver, that multitudes are undone, by graſping at more than they can conveniently manage. Hence it has frequently been ſeen, that while they have ſeemed reſolved to be rich, they have pierced themſelves thro' with many ſorrows (p), have ruined their own families, and drawn down many others into deſolation with them. Whereas, could they have been contented with moderate employments and moderate gains, they might have proſpered in their buſineſs, and might by ſure degrees, under a divine bleſſing, have advanced to great and honourable increaſe. But if there were no danger at all to be apprehended on this head, if you were as certain of becoming rich and great, as you are of perplexing and fatiguing yourſelf in the attempt, conſider, I beſeech you, how precarious theſe enjoyments are. Conſider, how often a plentiful table becomes a ſnare, and that which ſhould have been for a man's welfare, becomes a trap (q). Forget not that ſhort leſſon, which is ſo comprehenſive of the higheſt wiſdom, one thing is needful (r). Be daily thinking, while the gay and great things of life are glittering before your eyes, how ſoon death will come, and impoveriſh you at once; how ſoon it will ſtrip you of all poſſeſſions, but thoſe which a naked ſoul can carry along with it into eternity, when it drops the body into the grave. ETERNITY! ETERNITY! ETERNITY! Carry the view of it about with you, if it be poſſible, thro' every hour of walking life; and be fully perſuaded, that you have no buſineſs, no intereſt in life, that is inconſiſtent with it: For whatſoever would be injurious to this view, is not your buſineſs,

[p] 1 Tim vi. 10. [q] Pſal. lxix. 22. [r] Luke x. 42.

neſs, is not your intereſt. You ſee indeed, that the generality of men act, as if they thought the great thing which God required of them, in order to ſecure his favour, was to get as much of the world as poſſible; at leaſt as much as they can without any groſs immorality, and without riſquing the loſs of all, for making a little addition. And as if it were to abet this deſign, they tell others, and perhaps tell themſelves, They only ſeek opportunities of greater uſefulneſs.—But in effect, if they mean any thing more by this, than a capacity of uſefulneſs, which when they have it, they will not exert, they generally deceive themſelves; and one way or another, it is a vain pretence. In moſt inſtances, men ſeek the world,——either that they may hoard up riches, for the mean and ſcandalous ſatisfaction of looking upon them while they are living, and of thinking, that when they are dead it will be ſaid of them, that they have left ſo many hundreds or thouſands of pounds behind them; very probably, to inſnare their children, or other heirs, (for the vanity is not peculiar to thoſe, who have children of our own:)—Or elſe, that they may laviſh away their riches on their luſts, and drown themſelves in a gulf of ſenſuality, in which, if reaſon be not loſt, religion is ſoon ſwallowed up, and with it all the nobleſt pleaſures which can enter into the heart of man. In this view, the generality of rich people appear to me objects of much greater compaſſion than the poor; Eſpecially as when both live (which is frequently the caſe,) without any fear of God before their eyes, the rich abuſe the greater variety and abundance of his favours, and therefore will probably feel, in that world of future ruin which awaits impenitent ſinners, a more exquiſite ſenſe of their miſery.

§. 7. And let me obſerve to you, my dear reader, leſt you ſhould think yourſelf ſecure from any ſuch danger, that we have great reaſon to apprehend, there are many now in a very wretched ſtate, who once thought ſeriouſly of religion, when they were firſt ſetting out, in lower circumſtances of life, but they have ſince forſaken

ſaken God for mammon, and are now priding themſelves in thoſe golden chains, which in all probability, before it be long, will leave them to remain in thoſe of darkneſs. When therefore an attachment to the world, may be followed with ſuch fatal conſequences, let not thine heart envy ſinners (s); and do not, out of a deſire of gaining what they have, be guilty of ſuch folly as to expoſe yourſelf to this double danger, of failing in the attempt, or of being undone by the ſucceſs of it. Contract your deſires; endeavour to be eaſy and content with a little: And if providence call you out to act in a larger ſphere, ſubmit to it in obedience to providence; but number it among the trials of life, which it will require a large proportion of grace to bear well. For be aſſured, that as affairs and intereſts multiply, cares and duties will certainly increaſe, and probably diſappointments and ſorrows will increaſe in an equal proportion.

§. 8. On the whole, learn by divine grace to die to the preſent world; to look upon it as a low ſtate of being, which God never intended for the final and compleat happineſs, or the ſupream care of any one of his children: A world, where ſomething is indeed to be enjoyed, but chiefly from himſelf; where a great deal is to be born with patience and reſignation; and where ſome important duties are to be performed, and a courſe of diſcipline to be paſſed thro', by which you are to be formed for a better ſtate; to which as a chriſtian you are, near, and to which God will call you, perhaps on a ſudden, but undoubtedly, if you hold on your way, in the fitteſt time and the moſt convenient manner.—Refer therefore all this to him. Let your hopes and fears, your expectations and deſires, with regard to this world, be kept as low as poſſible; and all your thoughts be united, as much as may be, in this one center, what it is, that God would, in preſent circumſtances, have you to be; and what is that method of conduct, by which you may moſt effectually pleaſe and glorify him?

The

(s) Prov. xxiii. 17.

The young convert's Prayer *for divine protection, againſt the danger of theſe ſnares.*

"BLESSED GOD! in the midſt of ten thouſand ſnares and dangers, which ſurround me from without and from within. Permit me to look up unto thee with my humble intreaty, that thou wouldſt deliver me from them that riſe up againſt me (t), and that thine eyes may be upon me for good (u)! When ſloth and indolence are ready to ſeize me, awaken me from that idle dream, with lively and affectionate views of that inviſible and eternal world, to which I am tending! remind me of what infinite importance it is, that I diligently improve thoſe tranſient moments, which thou haſt allotted to me as the time of my preparation for it!

"When ſinners entice me, may I not conſent (x)! may holy converſe with God give me a diſreliſh for the converſe of thoſe, who are ſtrangers to thee, and who would ſeparate my ſoul from thee! may I honour them that fear the Lord (y), and walking with ſuch wiſe and holy men, may I find I am daily advancing in wiſdom and holineſs (z)! quicken me, O Lord, by their means; that by me thou mayeſt alſo quicken others! Make me the happy inſtrument of inkindling and animating the flame of divine love in their breaſts; and may it catch from heart to heart, and grow every moment in its progreſs!

"Guard me, O Lord, from the love of ſenſual pleaſure! May I ſeriouſly remember, that to be carnally minded is death (a)! May it pleaſe thee therefore, to purify and refine my ſoul by the influences of thine holy ſpirit, that I may always ſhun unlawful gratifications, more ſolicitouſly than others purſue them; and that thoſe indulgences of animal nature, which thou haſt allowed, and which the conſtitution of things renders neceſſary, may be ſoberly and moderately uſed! may

[t] Pſal. lix. 1. [u] Jer. xxiv. 6. [x] Prov. i. 10.
[y] Pſal. xv. 4. [z] Prov. xiii. 20. [a] Rom. viii 6.

may I ſtill remember the ſuperior dignity of my ſpiritual and intelligent nature, and may the pleaſures of the man and the chriſtian be ſought as my nobleſt happineſs! May my ſoul riſe on the wings of holy contemplation, to the regions of inviſible glory; and may I be endeavouring to form myſelf, under the influences of divine grace, for the entertainments of thoſe angelic ſpirits, that live in thy preſence in a happy incapacity of thoſe groſs delights, by which ſpirits dwelling in fleſh are ſo often inſnared, and in which they ſo often loſe the memory of their high original, and of thoſe noble hopes which alone are proportionable to it!

"Give me, O Lord, to know the ſtation in which thou haſt fixed me, and ſteadily to purſue the duties of it! But deliver me from thoſe exceſſive cares of this world, which would ſo engroſs my time and my thoughts, that the one thing needful ſhould be forgotten! may my deſires after worldly poſſeſſions be moderated, by conſidering their uncertain and unſatisfying nature; and while others are laying up treaſures on earth may I be rich towards God (b)! may I never be too buſy to attend to thoſe great affairs, which lie between thee and my ſoul; never be ſo engroſſed with the concerns of time, as to neglect the intereſts of eternity! may I paſs thro' earth with my heart and hopes ſet upon heaven, and feel the attractive influence ſtronger and ſtronger, as I approach ſtill nearer and nearer to that deſireable centre; till the happy moment come, when every earthly object ſhall diſappear from my view, and the ſhining glories of the heavenly world ſhall fill my improved and ſtrengthened ſight, which ſhall then be cheared with that which would now overwhelm me! *Amen.*"

CHAP.

[b] Luke xii, 21.

CHAP. XXII.

The Caſe of a ſpiritual Decay and Languor in Religion.

Declenſions in religion, and relapſes into ſin, with their ſorrowful conſequences, are in the general too probable. §. 1. *The caſe of declenſion and languor in religion deſcribed, negatively:* §. 2. *and poſitively;* §. 3. *as diſcovering itſelf,* (1.) *By a failure in the duties of the cloſet.* §. 4. (2.) *By a neglect of ſocial worſhip.* §. 5. (3.) *By want of love to our fellow-chriſtians.* §. 6. (4.) *By an undue attachment to ſenſual pleaſures, or ſecular cares.* §. 7. (5.) *By prejudices againſt ſome important principles in religion:* §. 8. *A ſymptom peculiarly ſad and dangerous.* §. 9, 10. *Directions for recovery,* §. 11. *immediately to be purſued.* §. 12. *A prayer for one under ſpiritual decays.*

1. IF I am ſo happy as to prevail upon you in the exhortation and cautions I have given, you will probably go on with pleaſure, and comfort in religion; and your path will generally be like the morning light, which ſhineth more and more until the perfect day (a). Yet I dare not flatter myſelf with an expectation of ſuch ſucceſs, as ſhall carry you above thoſe varieties in temper, conduct, and ſtate, which have been more or leſs the complaint of the beſt of men. Much do I fear, that how warmly ſoever your heart may now be impreſſed with the repreſentation I have been making, tho' the great objects of your faith and hope continue unchangeable, your temper towards them will be changed. Much do I fear, that you will feel your mind languiſh and tire in the good ways of God! nay that you may be prevailed upon to take ſome ſtep out of them, and may thus fall a prey to ſome of thoſe temptations, which you

[a] Prov. iv. 18.

you now look upon with a holy ſcorn. The probable conſequence of this will be, that God will hide his face from you; that he will ſtretch forth his afflicting hand againſt you; and that you will ſtill ſee your ſorrowful moments, how chearfully ſoever you may now be rejoycing in the Lord, and joying in the God of your ſalvation (b). I hope therefore, it may be of ſome ſervice, if this too probable event ſhould happen, to conſider theſe caſes a little more particularly: And I heartily pray, that God would make what I ſhall ſay concerning them, the means of reſtoring, comforting, and ſtrengthening your ſoul, if he ever ſuffers you in any degree to deviate from him.

§. 2. We will firſt conſider the caſe of ſpiritual declenſions, and languor in religion. And here I deſire, that, before I proceed any farther, you would obſerve, that I do not comprehend under this head every abatement of that fervour, which a young convert may find when he firſt becomes experimentally acquainted with divine things. Our natures are ſo framed, that the novelty of objects ſtrikes them in ſomething of a peculiar manner: not to urge, how much more eaſily our paſſions are impreſſed in the earlier years of life, than when we are more advanced in the journey of it. This, perhaps, is not ſufficiently conſidered. Too great a ſtreſs is commonly laid on the flow of affections; and for want of this a chriſtian who is ripened in grace, and greatly advanced in his preparation for glory, may ſometimes be ready to lament imaginary rather than real decays, and to ſay, without any juſt foundation, Oh that it were with me as in months paſt (c). Therefore you can hardly be too frequently told, that religion conſiſts chiefly, "in the reſolution of the will for God, and in a conſtant care to avoid whatever we are perſuaded he would diſapprove, to diſpatch the work he has aſſigned us in life, and to promote his glory in the happineſs of mankind." To this we are chiefly to attend, looking in all to the ſimplicity and purity of thoſe motives from which we act, which we know are chiefly regarded by that God who ſearches the heart; humbling ourſelves before

[b] Heb. iii. 18. [c] Job xxix. 2.

before him at the ſame time under a ſenſe of our many imperfections, and flying to the blood of Chriſt and the grace of the goſpel.

§. 3. Having given this precaution, I will now a little more particularly deſcribe the caſe, which I call the ſtate of a chriſtian who is declining in religion; ſo far as it does not fall in with thoſe, which I ſhall conſider in the following chapters. And I muſt obſerve, that it chiefly conſiſts "in a forgetfulneſs of divine objects, and a remiſſneſs in thoſe various duties, to which we ſtand engaged by that ſolemn ſurrender, which we have made of ourſelves to the ſervice of God." There will be a variety of ſymptoms, according to the different circumſtances and relations in which the chriſtian is placed; but ſome will be of a more univerſal kind. It will be particularly proper to touch on theſe; and ſo much the rather, as theſe declenſions are often unobſerved, like the grey hairs which were upon Ephraim, when he knew it not (d).

§. 4. Should you, my good reader, fall into this ſtate, it will probably firſt diſcover itſelf, by a failure in the duties of the cloſet. Not that I ſuppoſe they will at firſt, or certainly conclude, that they will at all, be wholly omitted: But they will be run over in a cold and formal manner. Sloth, or ſome of thoſe other ſnares which I cautioned you againſt in the former chapter, will ſo far prevail upon you, that tho' perhaps you know and recollect, that the proper ſeaſon for retirement is come, you will ſometimes indulge yourſelf upon your bed in the morning, ſometimes in converſation or buſineſs in the evening, ſo as not to have convenient time for it. Or perhaps, when you come into your cloſet at that ſeaſon, ſome favourite book you are deſirous to read, ſome correſpondence that you chuſe to carry on, or ſome other amuſement will preſent itſelf, and plead to be diſpatched firſt. This will probably take up more time than yon imagined; and then ſecret prayer will be hurried over, and perhaps reading the ſcripture quite neglected. You will plead perhaps,

(d) Hoſ. vii. 9.

that it is but for once; but the ſame allowance will be made a ſecond and a third time; and it will grow more eaſy and familiar to you each time, than it was the laſt. And thus God will be mocked, and your own ſoul will be defrauded of its ſpiritual meals, if I may be allowed the expreſſion; the word of God will be ſlighted, and ſelf-examination quite diſuſed; and ſecret prayer itſelf will grow a burthen, rather than a delight; a trifling ceremony, rather than a devout homage fit for the acceptance of our Father who is in heaven.

§. 5. If immediate and reſolute meaſures be not taken for your recovery from theſe declenſions, they will ſpread farther, and reach the acts of ſocial worſhip. You will feel the effect in your families, and in public ordinances. And if you do not feel it, the ſymptoms will be ſo much the worſe. Wandering thoughts will (as it were) eat out the very heart of theſe duties. It is not, I believe, the privilege of the moſt eminent chriſtians, to be entirely free from them: But probably in theſe circumſtances, you will find but few intervals of ſtrict attention, or of any thing which wears the appearance of inward devotion. And when theſe heartleſs duties are concluded, there will ſcarce be a reflection made, how little God hath been enjoyed in them, how little he hath been honoured by them. Perhaps the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper, being ſo admirably adapted to fix the attention of the ſoul, and to excite its warmeſt exerciſe of holy affections, may be the laſt ordinance in which theſe declenſions will be felt. And yet, who can ſay, that the ſacred table is a privileged place? Having been unneceſſarily ſtraitened in your preparations, you will attend with leſs fixedneſs and enlargement of heart than uſual. And perhaps a diſſatisfaction in the review, when there has been a remarkable alienation or inſenſibility of mind, may occaſion a diſpoſition to forſake your place and your duty there. And when your ſpiritual enemies have once gained this point upon you, it is probable you will fall by ſwifter degrees than ever, and your reſiſtance to their attempts will grow weaker and weaker.

§. 6.

§. 6. When your love to God our Father, and to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt fails, your fervour of chriſtian affection to your brethren in Chriſt will proportionably decline, and your concern for uſefulneſs in life abate; eſpecially, where any thing is to be done for ſpiritual edification. You will find one excuſe or another, for the neglect of religious diſcourſe, perhaps not only among neighbours and chriſtian friends, when very convenient opportunities offer; but even with regard to thoſe, who, if you are fixed in the ſuperior relations of life, are committed to your care.

§. 7. With this remiſſneſs, an attachment, either to ſenſual pleaſure, or to worldly buſineſs, will increaſe. For the ſoul muſt have ſomething to employ it, and ſomething to delight itſelf in: And as it turns to one or the other of theſe, temptations of one ſort or another will preſent themſelves. In ſome inſtances, perhaps the ſtricteſt bounds of temperance, and the regular appointments of life may be broken in upon, thro' a fondneſs for company, and the entertainments which often attend it.—In other inſtances, the intereſts of life appearing greater than they did before, and taking up more of the mind, contrary intereſts of other perſons may throw you into diſquietude, or plunge you in debate and contention; in which it is extremely difficult to preſerve, either the ſerenity, or the innocence of the ſoul. And perhaps, if miniſters and other chriſtian friends obſerve this, and endeavour in a plain and faithful way to reduce you from your wandering, a falſe delicacy of mind, often contracted in ſuch a ſtate as this, will render theſe attempts extremely diſagreeable. The ulcer of the ſoul (if I may be allowed the expreſſion,) will not bear being touched, when it moſt needs it; and one of the moſt generous and ſelf-denying inſtances of chriſtian friendſhip ſhall be turned into an occaſion of coldneſs and diſtaſte, yea, perhaps of enmity.

§. 8. And poſſibly, to ſum up all, this diſordered ſtate of mind may lead you into ſome prejudices againſt thoſe very principles, which might be moſt effectual for your recovery: And your great enemy may ſucceed ſo far in

his attempt againſt you, as to perſuade you, that you have loſt nothing in religion, when you have almoſt loſt all. He may very probably lead you to conclude, that your former devotional frames were mere fits of enthuſiaſm; and that the holy regularity of your walk before God was an unneceſſary ſtrictneſs and ſcrupuloſity. Nay, you may think it a great improvement in underſtanding, that you have learnt from ſome new maſters, that if a man treat his fellow-creatures with humanity and good nature, judging and reviling only thoſe who would diſturb others by the narrowneſs of their notions, (for theſe are generally exempted from other objects of the moſt univerſal and diſintereſted benevolence ſo often boaſted of,) he muſt neceſſarily be in a very good ſtate, tho' he pretend not to converſe much with God, provided that he think reſpectfully of him, and do not provoke him by any groſs immoralities.

§. 9. I mention this in the laſt ſtage of religious declenſions, becauſe I apprehend that to be its proper place; and I fear, it will be found by experience to ſtand upon the very confines of that groſs apoſtacy into deliberate and preſumptuous ſin, which will claim our conſideration under the next head: And becauſe too, it is that ſymptom, which moſt effectually tends to prevent the ſucceſs, and even the uſe, of any proper remedies, in conſequence of a fond and fatal apprehenſion, that they are needleſs. It is, if I may borrow the ſimile, like thoſe fits of lethargic drowſineſs, which often precede apoplexies and death.

§. 10. It is by no means my deſign at this time to reckon up, much leſs to conſider at large, thoſe dangerous principles, which are now ready to poſſeſs the mind and to lay the foundation of a falſe and treacherous peace. Indeed they are in different inſtances various, and ſometimes run into oppoſite extremes. But if God awaken you to read your bible with attention, and give you to feel the ſpirit with which it is written, almoſt every page will flaſh in conviction upon the mind, and ſpread a light to ſcatter and diſperſe theſe ſhades of darkneſs.

§. 11.

§. 11. What I chiefly intend in this addreſs, is to engage you, if poſſible, as ſoon as you perceive the firſt ſymptoms of theſe declenſions, to be upon your guard, and to endeavour as ſpeedily as poſſible to recover your ſelf from them. And I would remind you, that the remedy muſt begin, where the firſt cauſe of complaint prevailed, I mean, in the cloſet. Take ſome time for recollection, and aſk your own conſcience ſeriouſly, how matters ſtand between the bleſſed God, and your ſoul? Whether they are as they once were, and as you could wiſh them to be, if you ſaw your life juſt drawing to a period, and were to paſs immediately into the eternal ſtate? One ſerious thought of eternity ſhames a thouſand vain excuſes, with which, in the forgetfulneſs of it, we are ready to delude our own ſouls. And when you feel that ſecret miſgiving of heart, which will naturally ariſe on this occaſion, do not endeavour to palliate the matter, and to find out the ſlight and artful coverings, for what you cannot forbear ſecretly condemning; but honeſtly fall under the conviction, and be humbled for it. Pour out your heart before God, and ſeek the renewed influences of his ſpirit and grace. Return with more exactneſs to ſecret devotion, and to ſelf-examination. Read the ſcripture with yet greater diligence, and eſpecially the more devotional and ſpiritual parts of it. Labour to ground it in your heart, and to feel, what you have reaſon to believe the ſacred penmen felt when they wrote, ſo far as circumſtances may agree. Open your ſoul with all ſimplicity, to every leſſon which the word of God would teach you; and guard againſt thoſe things, which you perceive to alienate your mind from inward religion, tho' there be nothing criminal in the things themſelves. They may perhaps in the general be lawful; to ſome poſſibly they may be expedient; but if they produce ſuch an effect as was mentioned above, it is certain they are not convenient for you. In theſe circumſtances, above all ſeek the converſe of thoſe chriſtians, whoſe progreſs in religion ſeems moſt remarkable, and who adorn their profeſſion in the moſt amiable manner. Labour to obtain their temper

and ſentiments, and lay open your caſe and your heart to them, with all the freedom which prudence will permit. Employ yourſelf, at ſeaſons of leiſure, in reading practical and devotional books, in which the mind and heart of the pious author is transfuſed into the work, and in which you can (as it were) taſte the genuine ſpirit of chriſtianity. And to conclude, take the firſt opportunity that preſents, of making an approach to the table of the Lord, and ſpare neither time, nor pains, in the moſt ſerious preparation for it. There renew your covenant with God; put your ſoul anew into the hand of Chriſt, and endeavour to view the wonders of his dying love, in ſuch a manner as may rekindle the languiſhing flame, and quicken you to more vigorous reſolutions than ever, to live unto him who died for you (e). And watch over your own heart, that the good impreſſions you then feel, may continue. Reſt not, till you have obtained as confirmed a ſtate in religion, as you ever knew. Reſt not till you have made a greater progreſs than before: For it is certain, more is yet behind; and it is only by a zeal to go forward, that you can be ſecure from the danger of going backward, and revolting more and more:

§. 12. I only add, that it is neceſſary to take theſe precautions as ſoon as poſſible; or you will probably find a much ſwifter progreſs than you are aware in the down-hill road; and you may poſſibly be left of God, to fall into ſome groſs and aggravated ſin, ſo as to fill your conſcience with an agony and horror, which the pain of broken bones (f) can but imperfectly expreſs.

A Prayer *for one under Spiritual decays.*

"ETERNAL and unchangeable JEHOVAH! thy perfections and glories are, like thy being immutable. JESUS thy ſon is the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever (g). The eternal world to which I am haſtening, is always equally important, and preſſes upon the attentive mind for a more fixed and ſolemn regard, in proportion to the degree in which it comes nearer and nearer. But, alas, my views, and my affections, and my

(e) 2 Cor. v. 15. (f) Pſal. li. 8. (g) Heb. xiii. 8.

my beſt reſolutions are continually varying, like this poor body, which goes thro' daily and hourly alterations in its ſtate and circumſtances. Whence, O Lord, whence this ſad change, which I now experience, in the frame and temper of my mind towards theee? Whence this alienation of my ſoul from thee? Why can I not come to thee with all the endearments of filial love, as I once could? Why is thy ſervice ſo remiſsly attended, if attended at all? And why are the exerciſes of it, which were once my greateſt pleaſure, become a burthen to me! where, O God, is the bleſſedneſs I once ſpake of (h), when my joy in thee as my heavenly Father, was ſo conſpicuous, that ſtrangers might have obſerved it; and when my heart did ſo overflow with love to thee, and with zeal for thy ſervice, that it was matter of ſelf-denial to me, to limit and reſtrain the genuine expreſſions of thoſe ſtrong emotions of my ſoul, even where prudence and duty required it?

"Alas, Lord, whether am I fallen! thine eye ſees me ſtill; but Oh how unlike what it once ſaw me! cold and inſenſible as I am, I muſt bluſh on the reflection. Thou ſeeſt me in ſecret (i), and ſeeſt me, perhaps often amuſing myſelf with trifles in thoſe ſeaſons, which I uſed ſolemnly to devote to thine immediate ſervice. Thou ſeeſt me, coming into thy preſence as by conſtraint; and when I am before thee, ſo ſtraitened in my ſpirit, that I hardly know what to ſay to thee, tho' thou art the God with whom I have to do, and tho' the keeping up an humble and dutiful correſpondence with thee is beyond all compariſon the moſt important buſineſs of my life. And even when I am ſpeaking to thee, with how much coldneſs and formality is it? It is perhaps the work of the imagination, the labour of the lips: But where are thoſe ardent deſires, thoſe intenſe breathings after God which I once felt? Where is that pleaſing repoſe in thee, which I was once conſcious of, as being near my divine reſt, as being happy in that nearneſs, and reſolving that if poſſible I would no more be removed from it? But Oh, how

(h) Gal. iv. 15. (i) Mat. vi. 6.

how far am I now removed? When theſe ſhort devotions, if they may be called devotions, are over, in what long intervals do I forget thee, and appear ſo little animated with thy love, ſo little devoted to thy ſervice, that a ſtranger might converſe with me a conſiderable time, without knowing that I had ever formed any acquaintance with thee, without diſcovering that I had ſo much as known or heard any thing of God!—thou calleſt me to thine houſe, O Lord, on thine own day; but how heartleſs are my ſervices there? I offer thee no more than a carcaſe. My thoughts and affections are engroſſed with other objects, while I draw near thee with my mouth, and honour thee with my lips (k).——Thou calleſt me to thy table; but my heart is ſo frozen, that it hardly melts even at the foot of the croſs; hardly feels any efficacy in the blood of Jeſus. Oh wretched creature that I am! unworthy of being called thine! unworthy of a place among thy children, or of the meaneſt ſituation in thy family; rather worthy to be caſt out, to be forſaken, yea, to be utterly deſtroyed!

"Is this, Lord, the ſervice, which I once promiſed, and which thou haſt ſo many thouſand reaſons to expect? Are theſe the returns I am making, for thy daily providential care, for the ſacrifice of thy ſon, for the communications of thy ſpirit, for the pardon of my numberleſs aggravated ſins, for the hopes, the undeſerved and ſo often forfeited hopes of eternal glory? Lord, I am aſhamed to ſtand, or to kneel before thee. But pity me, I beſeech thee, and help me: For I am a pitiable object indeed! my ſoul cleaveth unto the duſt, and lays itſelf as in the duſt before thee; but Oh, quicken me according to thy word (l)! let me triſle no longer, for I am upon the brink of a precipice! I am thinking of my ways, Oh give me grace to turn my feet unto thy teſtimonies; to make haſte without any farther delay, that I may keep thy commandments (m)! ſearch me, Oh Lord, and try me (n)! Go to the firſt root

(k) Iſa. xxix. 13. (l) Pſal. cxix. 25. (m) Pſal. cxix. 59, 60.
(n) Pſal. cxxxix. 23.

root of this diſtemper, which ſpreads itſelf over my ſoul; and recover me from it! repreſent ſin unto me, O Lord, I beſeech thee, that I may ſee it with abhorrence! and repreſent the Lord Jeſus Chriſt to me, in ſuch a light, that I may look upon him and mourn (o), that I may look upon him and love! may I awaken from this ſtupid lethargy, into which I am ſinking; and may Chriſt give me more abundant degrees of ſpiritual life and activity, than I have ever yet received! and may I be ſo quickened and animated by him, that I may more than recover the ground I have loſt, and may make a more ſpeedy and exemplary progreſs, than in my beſt days I have ever yet done! ſend down upon me, O Lord, in a more rich and abundant effuſion, thy good ſpirit! may he dwell in me, as in a temple which he has conſecrated to himſelf (p); and while all the ſervice is directed and governed by him, may holy and acceptable ſacrifices be continually offered (q)! may the incenſe be conſtant, and may it be fragrant! may the ſacred fire burn and blaze perpetually (r); and may none of its veſſels ever be profaned, by being employed to an unholy or forbidden uſe! *Amen.*"

[o] Zech. xii. 10. [p] 1 Cor. iii. 16. [q] Rom. xii. 1.
[r] Lev. vi. 13.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIII.

The sad Case of a Relapse into known and deliberate Sin, after solemn Acts of Dedication to God, and some Progress made in Religion.

Unthought of relapses may happen, §. 1. *and bring the soul into a miserable case.* §. 2. *Yet the case is not desperate.* §. 3. *The backslider urged immediately to return:* (1.) *By deep humiliation before God for so aggravated an offence.* §. 4. (2.) *By renewed regards to the divine mercy in Christ.* §. 5. (3.) *By an open profession of repentance, where the crime hath given public offence.* §. 6. (4.) *Falls to be reviewed for future caution.* §. 7. *The chapter concludes.* §. 8. *With a prayer for the use of one who hath fallen into gross sins, after religious resolutions and engagements.*

§. 1. THE declensions which I have described in the foregoing chapter, must be acknowledged worthy of deep lamentation: But happy will you be, my dear reader, if you never know, by experience, a circumstance yet more melancholy than this.——Perhaps, when you consider the view of things which you now have, you imagine that no considerations can ever bribe you, in any single instance, to act contrary to the present dictates or suggestions of your conscience, and of the spirit of God as setting it on work. No: You think, it would be better for you to die. And you think rightly. But Peter thought, and said so too: Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee (a): And yet, after all, he fell: And therefore be not high minded, but fear (b). It is not impossible, but you may fall into that very sin,

(a) Mat. xxvi. 35. (b) Rom. xi. 20.

ſin, of which you imagine you are leaſt in danger, or into that againſt which you have moſt ſolemnly reſolved, and of which you have already moſt bitterly repented.—You may relapſe into it again and again, but, Oh, if you do, nay, if you ſhould deliberately and preſumptuouſly fall but once, how deep will it pierce your heart? How dear will you pay for all the pleaſure, with which the temptation has been baited? How will this ſeparate between God and you? What a deſolation, what a dreadful deſolation, will it ſpread over your ſoul? It is grievous to think of it. Perhaps in ſuch a ſtate you may feel more agony and diſtreſs in your own conſcience, when you come ſeriouſly to reflect, than you ever felt when you were firſt awakened and reclaimed; becauſe the ſin will be attended with ſome very high aggravations, beyond thoſe of your unregenerate ſtate. I well knew the perſon, that ſaid, "The agonies of a ſinner in the firſt pangs of his repentance, were not to be mentioned on the ſame day, with thoſe of the backſlider in heart, when he comes to be filled with his own way (c)."

§. 2. Indeed it is enough to wound one's heart to think, how yours will be wounded: How all your comforts, all your evidences, all your hopes will be clouded, what thick darkneſs will ſpread itſelf on every ſide, ſo that neither ſun, nor moon, nor ſtars, will appear in your heaven. Your ſpiritual conſolations will be gone; and your temporal enjoyments will alſo be rendered taſteleſs and inſipid. And if afflictions be ſent, as they probably may in order to reclaim you, a conſciouſneſs of guilt will ſharpen and invenom the dart. Then will the enemy of your ſoul with all his art and power riſe up againſt you, encouraged by your fall, and labouring to trample you down in utter hopeleſs ruin. He will perſuade you that you are already undone beyond recovery. He will ſuggeſt, that it ſignifies nothing to attempt it any more; for that every effort, every amendment, every act of repentance, will but make your caſe ſo much the worſe, and plunge you lower and lower into hell.

§. 3.

§. 3. Thus will he endeavour by terrors to keep you from that ſure remedy, which yet remains. But yield not to him. Your caſe will indeed be ſad; and if it be now your caſe, it is deplorably ſo; and to reſt in it would be ſtill much worſe. Your heart would be hardened yet more and more; and nothing could be expected, but ſudden and aggravated deſtruction. Yet bleſſed be God, it is not quite hopeleſs. Your wounds are corrupted, becauſe of your fooliſhneſs (d); but the gangrence is not incurable. There is a balm in Gilead, there is a phyſician there (e). Do not therefore render your condition indeed hopeleſs, by now ſaying, there is no hope (f), and drawing a fatal argument from that falſe ſuppoſition for going after the idols you have loved.—Let me addreſs you in the language of God to his backſliding people, when they were ready to apprehend that to be their caſe, and to draw ſuch a concluſion from it: Only return unto me ſaith the Lord (g). Cry for renewed grace; and in the ſtrength of it labour to return. Cry with David, under the like guilt; I have gone aſtray like a loſt ſheep, ſeek thy ſervant; for I do not forget thy commandments (h); and the remembrance of them is, I hope, a token for good. But if thou wilt return at all, do it immediately. Take not one ſtep more in that fatal path, to which thou haſt turned aſide. Think not to add one ſin more to the account, and then to repent; as if it would be but the ſame thing on the whole. The ſecond error may be worſe than the firſt; it may make way for another and another, and draw on a terrible train of conſequences, beyond all you can now imagine. Make haſte therefore, and do not delay. Eſcape, and fly as for thy life (i), before the dart ſtrike thro' thy liver (k). Give not ſleep to thine eyes nor ſlumber to thine eye-lids (l): Ly not down upon thy bed under unpardoned guilt, leſt evil overtake thee, leſt the ſword of divine juſtice ſhould ſmite thee; and whilſt thou purpoſeſt to return to-

[d] Pſal. xxxviii. 5. (e) Jer. viii. 22. [f] Jer. ii. 25. (g) Jer. iii. 1, 13. (h) Pſal. cxix. 176. (i) Gen. xix. 17. (k) Prov. vii. 23. (l) Prov. vi. 4.

to-morrow, thou ſhouldſt this night go and take poſſeſſion of hell.

§. 4. Return immediately; and permit me to add, return ſolemnly. Some very pious and excellent divines have expreſſed themſelves upon this head, in a manner which ſeems liable to dangerous abuſe; when they urge men after a fall, "not to ſtay to ſurvey the ground, nor conſider how they came to be thrown down, but immediately to get up and renew the race." In ſlighter caſes the advice is good: But when the conſcience has ſuffered ſuch violent outrage by the commiſſion of known, wilful, and deliberate ſin, (a caſe which one would hope, ſhould but ſeldom happen to thoſe who have once ſincerely entered on a religious courſe,) I can by no means think, that either reaſon or ſcripture encourage ſuch a method. Eſpecially would it be improper, if the action itſelf has been of ſo heinous a nature, that even to have fallen into it on the moſt ſudden ſurprize of temptation muſt greatly have aſhamed, and terrified, and diſtreſſed the ſoul. Such an affair is dreadfully ſolemn, and ſhould be treated accordingly. If this has been the ſad caſe with you, my then unhappy reader, I would pity you, and mourn over you; and would beſeech you, as you tender your peace, your recovery, the health and very life of your ſoul, that you would not loiter away an hour. Retire immediately for ſerious reflection. Break thro' other engagements and employments, unleſs they be ſuch as you cannot in conſcience delay for a few hours, which can ſeldom happen in the circumſtance I now ſuppoſe.—This is the one thing needful,. Set yourſelf for it, therefore, as in the preſence of God, and hear at large patiently and humbly what conſcience has to ſay, though it chide and reproach ſeverely. Yea, earneſtly pray, that God would ſpeak to you by conſcience, and make you more thoroughly to know and feel, what an evil and bitter thing it is, that you have thus forſaken him (m).—Think of all the aggravating circumſtances attending your offence; and eſpecially think of thoſe, which ariſe from abuſed mercy and goodneſs; which ariſe, not only

[m] Jer. ii. 9.

from your ſolemn vows and engagements to God, but from the views you have had of a redeemer's love, ſealed even in blood. And are theſe the returns? Was it not enough, that Chriſt ſhould have been thus injured by his enemies? Muſt he be wounded in the houſe of his friends too (n)? Were you delivered, to work ſuch abominations as theſe (o)? Did the bleſſed Jeſus groan and die for you, that you might ſin with boldneſs and freedom, that you might extract, as it were, the very ſpirit and eſſence of ſin, and offend God to a height of ingratitude and baſeneſs, which would otherwiſe have been in the nature of things impoſſible? Oh think, how juſtly God might caſt you out from his preſence! how juſtly he might number you among the moſt ſignal inſtances of his vengeance! and think, how your heart will endure, or your hands be ſtrong, if he ſhould deal thus with you (p)! alas! all your former experiences would enhance your ſenſe of the ruin and miſery, that muſt be felt in an eternal baniſhment from the divine preſence and favour.

§. 5. Indulge ſuch reflections as theſe. Stand the humbling ſight of your ſins in ſuch a view as this. The more odious and the more painful it appears, the greater proſpect there will be of your benefit by attending to it. But the matter is not to reſt here. All theſe reflections are intended, not to grieve, but to cure; and to grieve no more, than may promote the cure. You are indeed to look upon ſin: But you are alſo, in ſuch a circumſtance, if ever, to look upon Chriſt; to look upon him, whom you have now pierced deeper than before, and to mourn for him with ſincerity and tenderneſs (q). The God whom you have injured and affronted, whoſe laws you have broken, and whoſe juſtice you have (as it were) challenged by this fooliſh wretched apoſtacy, is nevertheleſs a moſt merciful God (r). You cannot be ſo ready to return to him as he is to receive you. Even now does he, as it were, ſolicit a reconciliation, by thoſe tender impreſſions which he is making upon your heart.

But

[n] Zech. xiii. 6. [o] Jer. vii. 10. [p] Ezek. xxii. 14. [q] Zech. xii. 10. [r] Deut. iv. 31.

But remember how he is to be reconciled. It is the very ſame way, in which you made your firſt approach to him; in the name, and for the ſake, of his dear ſon. Come therefore, in an humble dependance upon him. Renew your application to Jeſus, that his blood may (as it were) be ſprinkled upon your ſoul, that your ſoul may thereby be purified, and your guilt removed. This very ſin of yours, which the bleſſed God foreſaw, increaſed the weight of your redeemer's ſufferings: It was concerned in ſhedding his blood.——Humbly go, and place your wounds, as it were, under the droppings of that precious balm, by which alone they can be healed. That compaſſionate ſaviour will delight to reſtore you, when you lie as an humble ſuppliant at his feet, and will graciouſly take part with you in that peace and pleaſure which he gives. Through him renew your covenant with God, that broken covenant, the breach of which divine juſtice might teach you to know by terrible things in righteouſneſs (s): But mercy allows of an accommodation. Let the conſciouſneſs and remembrance of that breach engage you to enter into covenant anew, under a deeper ſenſe than ever of your own weakneſs, and a more cordial dependance on divine grace for your ſecurity, than you have ever yet entertained. I know, you will be aſhamed to preſent yourſelf among the children of God in his ſanctuary, and eſpecially at his table, under a conſciouſneſs of ſo much guilt: But break thro' that ſhame, if providence open you the way. You will be humbled before your offended father: But ſurely there is no place where you are more like to be humbled, than when you ſee yourſelf in his houſe, and no ordinance adminiſtered there can lay you lower than that in which Chriſt is evidently ſet forth as crucified before your eyes (t). Sinners are the only perſons who have buſineſs there.———The beſt of men come to that ſacred table, as ſinners. As ſuch make your approach to it; yea, as the greateſt of ſinners; as one who needs the blood of Jeſus, as much as any creature upon earth.

§. 6. And let me remind you of one thing more: If

(s) Pſal. lxv. 5. (t) Gal. iii. 1.

your fall has been of ſuch a nature as to give any ſcandal to others, be not at all concerned to ſave appearances, and to moderate thoſe mortifications which deep humiliation before them would occaſion. The depth and pain of that mortification is indeed an excellent medicine, which God has in his wiſe Goodneſs appointed for you in ſuch circumſtances as theſe. In ſuch a caſe, confeſs your fault with the greateſt frankneſs: Aggravate it to the utmoſt: Intreat pardon, and prayer, from thoſe whom you have offended. Then, and never till then, will you be in the way to peace: Not by palliating a fault, not by making vain excuſes, not by objecting to the manner in which others may have treated you; as if the leaſt exceſs of rigour in a faithful admonition were a crime equal to ſome great immorality that occaſioned it. This can only proceed from the madneſs of pride and ſelf-love: It is the ſenſibility of a wound, which is hardened, ſwelled, and inflamed; and it muſt be reduced, and cooled and ſuppled, before it can poſſibly be cured. To be cenſured, and condemned by men, will be but a little grievance, to a ſoul thoroughly humbled and broken under a ſenſe of having incurred the condemned ſentence of God.——Such a one would rather deſire to glorify God, by ſubmitting to deſerve blame; and will fear deceiving others into a more favourable opinion of him, than he inwardly knows himſelf to deſerve. Theſe are the ſentiments which God gives to the ſincere penitent in ſuch a caſe; and by this means he reſtores him to that credit and regard among others, which he does not know how to ſeek, but which nevertheleſs, for the ſake both of his comfort and uſefulneſs, God wills that he ſhould have; and which it is, humanly ſpeaking, impoſſible for him to recover any other way. But there is ſomething ſo honourable in the frank acknowledgement of a fault, and in deep humiliation for it, that all who ſee it, muſt needs approve it. They pity an offender, who is brought to ſuch a diſpoſition; and endeavour to comfort him with returning expreſſions, not only of their love, but of their eſteem too.

§. 7. Excuſe this digreſſion, which may ſuit ſome caſes;

caſes; and which would ſuit many more, if a regular diſcipline were to be exerciſed in churches: For on ſuch a ſuppoſition, the Lord's ſupper could not be approached after viſible and ſcandalous falls, without ſolemn confeſſion of the offence, and the declarations of repentance. On the other hand, there may be inſtances of ſad apoſtacy, where the crime, tho' highly aggravated before God, may not fall under human notice. In this caſe, remember, that your buſineſs is with him, to whoſe piercing eye every thing appears in its juſt light: Before him therefore proſtrate your ſoul, and ſeek a ſolemn reconciliation with him, confirmed by the memorials of his dying ſon. And when this is done, imagine not, that becauſe you have received the tokens of pardon, the guilt of your apoſtacy is to be forgot at once. Bear it ſtill in your memory for future caution: Lament it before God, in the frequent returns of ſecret devotion eſpecially: And view with humiliation the ſcars of thoſe wounds which your own folly occaſioned, even when by divine grace they are thoroughly healed. For God eſtabliſhes his covenant, not to remove the ſenſe of every paſt abomination, but that thou mayeſt remember thy ways, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more becauſe of thy ſhame, even when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou haſt done, ſaith the Lord (u).

§. 8. And now, upon the whole, if you deſire to attain ſuch a temper, and to return by ſuch ſteps as theſe, then immediately fall down before God, and pour out your heart in his preſence, in language like this.

A Prayer *for one who has fallen into groſs ſin, after religious reſolutions and engagements.*

"O MOST Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God! when I ſeriouſly reflect on thy ſpotleſs purity, and on the ſtrict and impartial methods of thy ſteady adminiſtration, together with that almighty power of thine, which is able to carry every thought of thine heart into immediate and full execution, I may juſtly appear before

(u) Ezek. vi. 63.

thee this day with ſhame and terror, in confuſion and conſternation of ſpirit. This day, O my God, this dark mournful day, would I take occaſion to look back to that ſad ſource of our guilt, and our miſery, the apoſtacy of our common parents, and ſay with thine offending ſervant David, behold, I was ſhapen in iniquity, and in ſin did my mother conceive me (w). This day would I lament all the fatal conſequences of ſuch a deſcent, with regard to myſelf. And Oh how many have they been! The remembrance of the ſins of my unconverted ſtate, and the failings and infirmities of my after life, may juſtly confound me! how much more ſuch a ſcene, as now lies before my conſcience, and before thine all-ſeeing eye? For thou, O Lord, knoweſt my fooliſhneſs, and my ſins are not hide from thee (x). Thou telleſt all my wanderings from thy ſtatutes (y): Thou ſeeſt, and thou recordeſt, every inſtance of my diſobedience to thee, and of my rebellion againſt thee: Thou ſeeſt it in every aggravated circumſtance which I can diſcern, and in many more which I never obſerved or reflected upon.—How then ſhall I appear in thy preſence, or lift up my face to thee (z)! I am full of confuſion (a), and feel a ſecret regret in the thought of applying to thee: But, O Lord, to whom ſhould I go, but unto thee (b)? Unto thee, on whom depends my life, or my death; unto thee, who alone canſt take away the burden of guilt, which now preſſes me down to the duſt; who alone canſt reſtore to my ſoul that reſt and peace which I have loſt, and which I deſerve for ever to loſe?

"Behold me, O Lord God, falling down at thy feet! behold me pleading guilty in thy preſence, and ſurrendering myſelf to that juſtice which I cannot eſcape! I have not one word to offer in my own vindication, in my own excuſe. Words, far from being able to clear up my innocence, can never ſufficiently deſcribe the enormity and demerit of my ſin. Thou, O Lord, and thou only knoweſt to the full, how heinous and how aggravated it is. Thine infinite underſtanding alone, can fathom

(w) Pſal. li. 5. (x) Pſal. lxix. 5. (y) Pſal. lvi. 8. (z) Ezra ix. 6. (a) Job. x. 15. (b) John vi. 65.

fathom the infinite depth of its malignity. I am, on many accounts, moſt unable to do it. I cannot conceive the value of the blood of thy dear ſon, which I have ungratefully trampled under my feet; nor the dignity of that bleſſed ſpirit of thine, whoſe agency I have, as far as I could, been endeavouring to oppoſe, and whoſe work I have been, as with all my might, labouring to undo, and to tear up (as it were) that plantation of his grace, which I ſhould rather have been willing to have guarded with my life, and watered with my blood. Oh the baſeneſs aud madneſs of my conduct! that I ſhould thus, as it were, rend open the wounds of my ſoul, of which I had died long ere this, had not thine "own hand applied a remedy, had not thine only Son bled to prepare it! that I ſhould violate the covenant I have made with thee by ſacrifice (c), by the memorials of ſuch a ſacrifice too, even of Jeſus, my Lord, whereby I am become guilty of his body and blood (d)! that I ſhould bring ſuch diſhonour upon religion too, by ſo unſuitable a walk, and perhaps open the mouths of its greateſt enemies to inſult it upon my account, and prejudice ſome againſt it to their everlaſting deſtruction!

"I wonder, O Lord God, that I am here to own all this. I wonder, that thou haſt not long ago appeared as a ſwift witneſs againſt me (e); that thou haſt not diſcharged the thunderbolts of thy flaming wrath againſt me, and cruſhed me into hell; making me there a terror to all about me, as well as to myſelf, by a vengeance and ruin, to be diſtinguiſhed even there, where all are miſerable, and all hopeleſs.

"O God, thy patience is marvellous! but how much more marvellous is thy grace, which after all this invites me to thee! While I am here giving judgment againſt myſelf, that I deſerve to die, to die for ever, thou art ſending me the words of everlaſting life, and calling me as a backſliding child, to return unto thee (f). Behold therefore, O Lord, invited by thy word, and encouraged

[c] Pſal. l. 5. [d] 1 Cor. xi. 27. [e] Mal. iii. 5.
[f] Jer. iii. 22.

couraged by thy grace, I come; and great as my tranſgreſſions are, I humbly beſeech thee freely to pardon them: Becauſe I know, that tho' my ſins have reached unto heaven (g), and are lifted up even unto the ſkies (h), thy mercy, O Lord, is above the heavens (i). Extend that mercy to me, O heavenly Father; and diſplay, in this illuſtrious inſtance, the riches of thy grace, and the prevalency of thy Son's blood! for ſurely, if ſuch crimſon ſins as mine, may be made white as ſnow, and as wool (k), and if ſuch a revolter as I am be brought to eternal glory, earth muſt, ſo far as it is known, be filled with wonder, and heaven with praiſe; and the greateſt ſinner may chearfully apply for pardon, if I, the chief of ſinners find it. And Oh that, when I have lain mourning, and as it were bleeding at thy feet, as long as thou thinkeſt proper, thou wouldſt at length heal this ſoul of mine which has ſinned againſt thee (l); and give me beauty for aſhes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praiſe for the ſpirit of heavineſs (m)! Oh that thou wouldſt at length reſtore unto me the joy of thy ſalvation, and make me to hear ſongs of gladneſs, that the bones which thou haſt broken may rejoice (n)! then, when a ſenſe of thy forgiving love is ſhed abroad upon my heart, and it is cheared with the voice of pardon, I will proclaim thy grace to others; I will teach tranſgreſſors thy ways, and ſinners ſhall be converted unto thee (o): Thoſe that have been backſliding from thee, ſhall be encouraged to ſeek thee by my happy experience, which I will gladly proclaim for thy glory, tho' it be to my own ſhame and confuſion of face. And may this joy of the Lord be my ſtrength (p)! ſo that in it I may ſerve thee henceforward with a vigour and zeal far beyond what I have hitherto known!

"This I would aſk with all humble ſubmiſſion to thy will; for I preſume not to inſiſt upon it. If thou ſhouldſt ſee fit to make me a warning to others, by appointing that I ſhould walk all my days in darkneſs, and at

[g] Rev. xviii. 5. [h] Jer. li. 9. [i] Pſal. cviii. 4.
[k] Iſai. i. 18. [l] Pſal. xli. 4. [m] Iſai. lxi. 3.
[n] Pſal. li. 8, 12. [o] Pſal. li. 13. [p] Neh. viii. 10.

at laſt die under a cloud, thy will be done! But O God, extend mercy for thy Son's ſake, to this ſinful ſoul at laſt; and give me ſome place, tho' it were at the feet of all thine other ſervants, in the regions of glory! Oh bring me at length, tho' it ſhould be through the gloomieſt valley that any have ever paſſed, into that bleſſed world, where I ſhall depart from God no more, where I ſhall wound my own conſcience, and diſhonour thy holy name no more! then ſhall my tongue be looſed, how long ſoever it might here be bound under the confuſion of guilt; and immortal praiſes ſhall be paid to that victorious blood, which has redemed ſuch an infamous ſlave of ſin, as I muſt acknowledge myſelf to be, and brought me, from returns into bondage and repeated pollution, to ſhare the dignity and holineſs of thoſe, who are kings and prieſts unto God (q). *Amen.*"

[q] Rev. v. 6.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIV.

The Caſe of the Chriſtian under the Hidings of GOD's Face.

The phraſe ſcriptural. §. 1. *It ſignifies the withdrawing the tokens of the divine favour,* §. 2. *chiefly as to ſpiritual conſiderations.* §. 3. *This may become the caſe of any chriſtian,* §. 4. *and will be found a very ſorrowful one;* §. 5. *The following directions therefore, are given to thoſe who ſuppoſe it to be their own:* I. *To enquire whether it be indeed a caſe of ſpiritual diſtreſs, or whether a diſconſolate frame may not proceed from indiſpoſition of body,* §. 6. *or difficulties, as to worldly circumſtances.* §. 7. *If it be found to be indeed ſuch, as the title of the chapter propoſes, be adviſed,* II. *To conſider it as a merciful Diſpenſation of GOD, to awaken and beſtir the ſoul; and excite to a ſtrict examination of conſcience, and reformation of what has been amiſs.*— §. 8, 9. III. *To be humble and patient while the trial continues.* §. 10. IV. *To go on ſteadily in the way of Duty.* §. 11. V. *To renew a believing application to the blood of Jeſus.* §. 12. *An humble ſupplication for one under theſe mournful exerciſes of mind, when they are found to proceed from the ſpiritual cauſe ſuppoſed.*

§. THERE is a caſe which often occurs in the chriſtian life, which they who accuſtom themſelves to the exerciſe of devotion, have been uſed to call the hidings of God's face. It is a phraſe borrowed from the word of God, which I hope may ſhelter it from contempt at the firſt hearing. It will be my buſineſs in this chapter, to ſtate it as plainly as I can, and then to give ſome advice as to your own conduct, when you fall into it, as it is very probable you may before you have finiſhed your journey thro' this wilderneſs.

§. 2. The meaning of it may partly be underſtood by

by the oppoſite phraſe, of God's cauſing his face to ſhine upon a perſon, or lifting up upon him the light of his countenance. This ſeems to carry in it an alluſion to the pleaſant and delightful appearance which the face of a friend has, and eſpecially if in a ſuperior relation of life, when he converſes with thoſe whom he loves and delights in. Thus Job, when ſpeaking of the regard paid him by his attendants, ſays, if I ſmiled upon them, they believed it not, and the light of my countenance they caſt not down (a); that is, they were careful, in ſuch an agreeable circumſtance, to do nothing to diſpleaſe me, or (as we ſpeak) to cloud my brow.—And David, when expreſſing his deſire of the manifeſtation of God's favour to him, ſays, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me; and, as the effect of it, declares, thou haſt put gladneſs into my heart more than if corn and wine increaſed (b). Nor is it impoſſible, that in this phraſe, as uſed by David, there may be ſome alluſion to the bright ſhining forth of the *Shekinah*, that is the luſtre which dwelt in the cloud as the viſible ſign of the divine preſence with Iſrael, which God was pleaſed peculiarly to manifeſt upon ſome public occaſions, as a token of his favour and acceptance.—On the other hand therefore, for God to hide his face, muſt imply the with-holding the tokens of his favour, and muſt be eſteemed a mark of his diſpleaſure. Thus Iſaiah uſes it: 'your iniquities have ſeparated between you and your God, and your ſins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear (c).' And again, 'thou haſt hid thy face from us, as not regarding the calamities we ſuffer, and haſt conſumed us, becauſe of our iniquities (d).' So likewiſe, for God, to hide his face from our ſins (e),' ſignifies to overlook them, to take no farther notice of them. The ſame idea is, at other times, expreſſed by God's hiding his eyes (f) from perſons of a character diſagreeable to him, when they come to addreſs him with their petition, not vouchſafing (as it were) to look towards them. This is plainly the ſcriptural ſenſe of

[a] Job xxix. 24. [b] Pſal. iv. 6, 7. [c] Iſa. lix. 2.
[d] Iſa. lxiv. 7. [e] Pſal. li. 9. (f) Iſa. i. 15.

of the word; and agreeable to this, it is generally uſed by chriſtians in our day, and every thing which ſeems a token of divine diſpleaſure towards them is expreſſed by it.

§. 3. It is farther to be obſerved here, that the things which they judge to be manifeſtations of divine favour towards them, or complacency in them, are not only, nor chiefly of a temporal nature, or ſuch as merely relate to the bleſſings of this animal and periſhing life. David, tho' the promiſes of the law had a continual reference to ſuch, yet was taught to look farther, and deſcribes them as preferable to, and therefore plainly diſtinct from, 'the bleſſings of the corn-floor or the wine-preſs (g).' And if you, to whom I am now addreſſing, do not know them to be ſo, it is plain you are quite ignorant of the ſubject we are enquiring into, and indeed are yet to take out the firſt leſſons of true religion. All that David ſays, of beholding the beauty of the Lord (h), or being ſatisfied as with marrow and fatneſs, when he remembered him on his bed, (i), as well as with the goodneſs of his houſe, even of his holy temple (k), is to be taken in the ſame ſenſe, and can need very little explication to the truly experienced ſoul. But thoſe that have known the light of God's countenance, and the ſhinings of his face, will, in proportion to the degree of that knowledge, be able to form ſome notion of the hiding of his face, or the withdrawing of the tokens he has given his people of his preſence and favour, which ſometimes greatly imbitters proſperity; as where the contrary is found, it ſweetens afflictions, and often ſwallows up the ſenſe of it.

§. 4. And give me leave to remind you, my chriſtian friend, (for under that character I now addreſs my reader,) that to be thus deprived of the ſenſe of God's love, and of the tokens of his favour, may ſoon be the caſe with you, tho' you may now have the pleaſure to ſee the candle of the Lord ſhining upon you, or tho' it may

(g) Pſal. iv. 7. (h) Pſal. xxvii. 4. (i) Pſal. cxiii. 5, 6.
(k) Pſal. lxv. 4.

may even ſeem to be ſun-ſhine and high noon in your ſoul. You may loſe your lively view of the divine perfections and glories, in the contemplation of which you now find that inward ſatisfaction. You may think of the divine wiſdom and power, of the divine mercy and fidelity, as well as of his righteouſneſs and holineſs, and feel little inward complacency of ſoul in the views. It may ſeem to you, as if you had loſt all idea of thoſe important words, tho' the view has ſometimes ſwallowed up your whole ſoul in tranſports of aſtoniſhment, admiration, and love. You may loſe your delightful ſenſe of the divine favour. It may be matter of great and ſad doubt with you, whether you do indeed belong to God; and all the work of his bleſſed ſpirit may be ſo veiled and ſhaded in the ſoul, that the peculiar characters, by which the hand of that ſacred agent might be diſtinguiſhed, ſhall be in a great meaſure loſt; and you may be ready to imagine, you have only deluded yourſelf in all the former hopes you have entertained. In conſequence of this, thoſe ordinances, in which you now rejoice, may grow very uncomfortable to you, even when you do indeed deſire commnnion with God in them. You may hear the moſt delightful evangelical truths opened, you may hear the privileges of God's children moſt affectionately repreſented, and not be aware that you have any part or lot in this matter; and from that very coldneſs and inſenſibility may be drawing a farther argument, that you have nothing to do with them. And then your heart may meditate terror (l), and under the diſtreſs that overwhelms you, your deareſt enjoyments may be reflected upon as adding to the weight of it, and making it more ſenſible, while you conſider that you had once ſuch a taſte for theſe things, and have now loſt it all. So that perhaps it may ſeem to you, that they, who never felt any thing at all of religious impreſſions, are happier than you, or at leaſt are leſs miſerable. You may perhaps in theſe melancholy hours, even doubt, whether you have ever prayed at all, and whether all that you called your

(l) Iſa. xxxiii. 18.

enjoyment of God, were not ſome falſe delight, excited by the great enemy of ſouls, to make you apprehend that your ſtate was good, that ſo you might continue his more ſecure prey.

§. 5. Such as this may be your caſe for a conſiderable time; and ordinances may be attended in vain, and the preſence of God may be in vain ſought in them. You may pour out your ſoul in private, and then come to the public worſhip, and find little ſatisfaction in either; but be forced to take up the Pſalmiſt's complaint; my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou heareſt not; and in the night ſeaſon, and am not ſilent (m); or that of Job, behold I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himſelf on the right hand that I cannot ſee him (n): So that all, which looked like religion in your mind, ſhall ſeem, as it were, to be melted into grief, or chilled into fear, or cruſhed into a deep ſenſe of your unworthineſs; in conſequence of which, you ſhall not dare ſo much as to lift up your eyes before God, and be almoſt aſhamed to to take your place in a worſhiping aſſembly among any that you think his ſervants. I have known this to be the caſe of ſome excellent chriſtians, whoſe improvements in religion have been diſtinguiſhed, and whom God hath honoured above many of their brethren in what he hath done for them, and by them. Give me leave therefore, having thus deſcribed it, to offer you ſome plain advices with regard to it; and let not that be imputed to enthuſiaſtic fancy, which proceeds from an intimate and frequent view of facts, on the one hand, and from a ſincere affectionate deſire, on the other, to relieve the tender pious heart in ſo deſolate a ſtate. At leaſt, I am perſuaded, the attempt will not be overlooked or diſapproved by the great ſhepherd of the ſheep (o), who hath charged us to comfort the feeble minded (p).

§. 6. And here I would firſt adviſe you moſt carefully

(m) Pſal. xxii. 2. (n) Job xxiii. 8, 9. (o) Heb. xiii. 20.
(p) 1 Theſſ. v. 14.

fully to enquire, Whether your preſent diſtreſs, does indeed ariſe from cauſes which are truly ſpiritual? Or whether it may not rather have its foundation in ſome diſorder of body, or in the circumſtances of life, in which you are providentially placed, which may break your ſpirits and deject your mind? The influence of the inferior part of our nature, on the nobler, the immortal ſpirit, while we continue in this embodied ſtate, is ſo evident, that no attentive perſon can, in the general fail to have obſerved it; and yet, there are caſes, in which it ſeems not to be ſufficiently conſidered; and perhaps your own may be one of them. The ſtate of the blood is often ſuch as neceſſarily to ſuggeſt gloomy ideas even in dreams, and to indiſpoſe the ſoul for taking pleaſure in any thing: And when it is ſo, why ſhould it be imagined to proceed from any peculiar divine diſpleaſure, if it does not find its uſual delight in religion? Or why ſhould God be thought to have departed from us, becauſe he ſuffers natural cauſes to produce natural effects, without oppoſing by miracle to break the connection? When this is the caſe, the help of the phyſician is to be ſought, rather than that of the divine, or at leaſt, by all means, together with it; and medicine, diet, exerciſe, and air, may, in a few weeks effect that, which the ſtrongeſt reaſonings, the moſt pathetic exhortations or conſolations, might for many months have attempted in vain.

§. 7. In other inſtances, the dejection and feebleneſs of the mind may ariſe from ſomething uncomfortable in our worldly circumſtances; theſe may cloud as well as diſtract the thoughts, and imbitter the temper, and thus render us in a great degree unfit for religious ſervices or pleaſures; and when it is ſo, the remedy is to be ſought in ſubmiſſion to divine providence, in abſtracting our affections as far as poſſible from the preſent world, in a prudent care to eaſe ourſelves of the burthen ſo far as we can, by moderating unneceſſary expences, and by diligent application to buſineſs in humble dependance on the divine bleſſing; in the mean time, endeavouring by faith to look up to him, who

ſometimes ſuffers his children to be brought into ſuch difficulties, that he may endear himſelf more ſenſibly to them by the method he ſhall take for their relief.

§. 8 On the principles here laid down, it may perhaps appear on enquiry, that the diſtreſs complained of, may have a foundation very different from what was at firſt ſuppoſed. But where the health is ſound, and the circumſtances eaſy; when the animal ſpirits are diſpoſed for gaity and entertainment, while all taſte for religious pleaſure is in a manner gone; when the ſoul is ſeized with a kind of lethargic inſenſibility, or, what I had almoſt called a paralytic weakneſs, with reſpect to every religious exerciſe, even tho' there ſhould not be that deep terrifying diſtreſs or pungent amazement, which I before repreſented as the effect of melancholy; nor that anxiety about the accommodations of life, which ſtraight circumſtances naturally produce: I would in that caſe vary my advice, and urge you, with all poſſible attention and impartiality, to ſearch into the cauſe which has brought upon you that great evil, under which you juſtly mourn. And probably in the general the cauſe is ſin; ſome ſecret ſin, which has not been diſcovered or obſerved by the eye of the world; for enormities that draw on them the obſervation and cenſure of others, will probably fall under the caſe mentioned in the former chapter, as they muſt be inſtances of known and deliberate guilt. Now the eye of God hath ſeen theſe evils which have eſcaped the notice of your fellow-creatures; and in conſequence of this care to conceal them from others, while you could not but know they were open to him, God has ſeen himſelf in a peculiar manner affronted, and injured, I had almoſt ſaid inſulted by them: And hence his righteous diſpleaſure. Oh! let that never be forgotten, which is ſo plainly ſaid, ſo commonly known, ſo familiar to almoſt every religious ear, yet too little felt by any of our hearts, your iniquities have ſeparated between you and your God, and your ſins have hid his face from you that he will not hear (q). And this is on the whole

(q) Iſa. lix. 1, 2.

a merciful dispensation of God, tho' it may seem severe; regard it not therefore, merely as your calamity, but as intended to awaken you, that you may not content yourself, even with lying in tears of humiliation before the Lord, but like Joshua rise and exert yourself vigorously, to put away from you that accursed thing whatever it be. Let this be your immediate and earnest care, that your pride may be humbled, that your watchfulness may be maintained, that your affections to the world may be deadened, and that on the whole, your fitness for heaven may in every respect be increased. These are the designs of your heavenly Father, and let it be your great concern to co-operate with them.

§. 6. Receive it therefore on the whole, as the most important advice that can be given you, 'immediately to enter on a strict examination of your conscience.—Attend to its gentlest whispers. If a suspicion arises in your mind, that any thing has not been right, trace that suspicion, search into every secret folding of your heart; improve to the purposes of a fuller discovery, the advices of your friends, the reproaches of your enemies; recollect for what your heart hath smitten you, at the table of the Lord, for what it would smite you, if you were upon a dying bed, and within this hour to enter on eternity. When you have made any discovery, note it down, and you can go on in your search till you can say, these are the remaining corruptions of my heart; these are the sins and follies of my life; this have I neglected; this have I done amiss. And when the account is as complete as you can make it, set yourself in the strength of God to a strenuous reformation, or rather begin the reformation of every thing that seems amiss as soon as ever you discover it; 'return to the Almighty and thou shalt be built up, and put iniquity far from thy tabernacle, then shalt thou have thy delight in the almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee; thou shalt pay

thy vows unto him, and his light ſhall ſhine upon thy ways (r).'

§. 10. In the mean time be waiting for God with the deepeſt humility, and ſubmit yourſelf to the diſcipline of your heavenly Father, acknowledging his juſtice, and hoping in his mercy; even when your conſcience is leaſt ſevere in its remonſtrances, and diſcovers nothing more than the common infirmities of God's people; yet ſtill bow yourſelf down before him, and own, that ſo many are the evils of your beſt days, ſo many the imperfections of your beſt ſervices, that by them you have deſerved all, and more than all that you ſuffer; deſerved, not only that your ſun ſhould be clouded, but that it ſhould go down, and ariſe no more, but leave your ſoul in a ſtate of everlaſting darkneſs. And while the ſhade continues, be not impatient. Fret not yourſelf in any wiſe, with a holy calmneſs and gentleneſs of ſoul, wait on the Lord (s). Be willing to ſtay his time, willing to bear his frown, in humble hope that he will at length 'return and have compaſſion on you (t). He has not utterly forgotten to be gracious, nor reſolved, that he will be favourable no more (u). For the Lord will not caſt off for ever; but tho' he cauſe grief, yet will he have compaſſion according to the multitude of his mercies (x).' It is comparatively but 'for a ſmall moment that he hides his face from you; but you may humbly hope, that with great mercies he will gather you, and that with everlaſting kindneſs he will have mercy on you (y).' Theſe ſuitable words are not mine, but his; and they wear this, as in the very front of them, 'that a ſoul under the hidings of God's face, may at leaſt be one whom he will gather, and to whom he will extend everlaſting favour.'

§. 11. but while the darkneſs continues, 'go on in the way of your duty.' Continue the uſe of means and ordinances: Read, and meditate: Pray, yes, and ſing the praiſes of God too, tho' it may be with a heavy heart

(r) Job xxii. 23, 26, 27. (s) Pſal. xxxvii. 8, 34. (t) Jer. 12. 15.
(u) Pſal. lxxvii. 7, 8. (x) Lam. iii. 31, 32. (y) Iſa. liv. 7 8.

heart. Follow the footſteps of his flock (z); you may perhaps meet the ſhepherd of ſouls in doing it. Place yourſelf at leaſt in his way. It is poſſible you may by this means get a kind look from him; and one look, one turn of thought which may happen in a moment, may as it were create a heaven in your ſoul at once. Go to the table of the Lord. If you cannot rejoice, go and mourn there. 'Go and mourn that Saviour, whom by your ſins you have pierced (a); go and lament the breaches of that covenant, which you have there ſo often confirmed. Chriſt may perhaps make himſelf known unto you in the breaking of bread (b),' and you may find, to your ſurprize, that he hath been near you, when you imagined he was at the greateſt diſtance from you; near you when you thought you were caſt out from his preſence. Seek your comfort in ſuch employments as theſe; and not in the vain amuſements of this world, and in the pleaſures of ſenſe. I ſhall never forget that affectionate expreſſion, which I am well aſſured broke out from an eminently pious heart, then almoſt ready to break under its ſorrows of this kind! 'Lord, if I may not enjoy thee, let me enjoy nothing elſe; but go down mourning after thee to the grave! I wondered not to hear, that almoſt as ſoon as this ſentiment had been breathed out before God in prayer, the burthen was taken off, and the joy of God's ſalvation reſtored.

§. 12. I ſhall add but one advice more; and that is, that you renew your application to the blood of Jeſus, thro' whom the reconciliation between God and your ſouls has been accompliſhed. It is he that is our peace, and by his blood it is that we are made nigh (c);' It is in him, as the beloved of his ſoul, that God declares, he is well pleaſed (d); and it is in him that we are made accepted to the glory of his grace (e).—Go therefore, O Chriſtian, and apply by faith to a crucified Saviour: Go and apply to him as to a merciful high-prieſt, 'and pour out thy complaint before him, and

[z] Cant. i. 8. [a] Zech. xii. 10. [b] Luke xxix. 35.
[c] Eph. ii. 13, 14. [d] Mat. iii. 17. [e] Eph. i. 6.

and ſhew before him thy trouble (f). Lay open the diſtreſs and anguiſh of thy ſoul to him, who once knew what it was to ſay, (O aſtoniſhing! that he of all others ſhould ever have ſaid it,) 'My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me (g)?' Look up for pity and relief to him, who himſelf ſuffered, being not only tempted, but with regard to ſenſible manifeſtations deſerted; that he might thus know how to pity thoſe that are in ſuch a melancholy caſe, and be ready, as well as able, to ſuccour them (h). He is Immanuel God with us (i); and it is only in and thro' him, that his Father ſhines forth upon us with the mildeſt beams of mercy and of love. Let it be therefore your immediate care, to renew your acquaintance with him. Review the records of his life and death: Hear his words: Behold his actions: And when you do ſo, ſurely you will find a ſacred ſweetneſs diffuſing itſelf over your ſoul. You will be brought into a calm, gentle, ſilent frame, in which faith and love will operate powerfully, and God may probably cauſe the ſtill ſmall voice of his comforting ſpirit to be heard (k), till your ſoul burſts out into a ſong of praiſe, and you may be made glad according to the days in which you have been afflicted (l). In the mean time, ſuch language as the following ſupplication ſpeaks may be ſuitable.

An humble Supplication *for one under the Hidings of God's face.*

"BLESSED GOD! with thee is the fountain of life (m), and of happineſs. I adore thy name, that I have ever taſted of thy ſtreams; that I have ever felt the peculiar pleaſure ariſing from the light of thy countenance, and the ſhedding abroad of thy love on the ſoul. But alas, theſe delightful ſeaſons are now to me no more; and the remembrance of them

[f] Pſal. cxlii. 2. [g] Mat. xxvi 46. [h] Heb. ii. 18.
[i] Mat. i. 23. [k] 1 Kings xix. 12. [l] Pſal. xc. 15.
[m] Pſal. xxxvi. 9.

them engages me to pour out my ſoul within me (n). I would come, as I have formerly done, and call thee, with the ſame endearment, my Father, and my God: But alas, I know not how to do it. Guilt and fear ariſe, and forbid the delightful language. I ſeek thee, O Lord, but I ſeek thee in vain. I would pray, and my lips are ſealed up. I would read thy word, and all the promiſes of it are veiled from mine eyes. I frequent thoſe ordinances, which have been formerly moſt nouriſhing and comfortable to my ſoul; but alas, they are only the ſhadows of ordinances: The ſubſtance is gone: The animating ſpirit is fled, and leaves them now at beſt but the image of what I once knew them.

" But, Lord, haſt thou caſt off for ever, and wilt thou be favourable no more (o)? Haſt thou in awful judgment determined, that my ſoul muſt be left to a perpetual winter, the ſad emblem of eternal darkneſs! indeed I deſerve it ſhould be ſo. I acknowledge, O Lord, I deſerve to be caſt away from thy preſence with diſdain; to be ſunk lower than I am, much lower: I deſerve to have the ſhadow of death upon mine eye-lids (p), and even to be ſurrounded with the thick gloom of the infernal priſon. But haſt thou not raiſed multitudes who have deſerved like me to be delivered into chains of darkneſs (q), to the viſions of thy glory above, where no cloud can ever interpoſe between thee and their rejoicing ſpirits? Have mercy upon me, O Lord, have mercy upon me (r)! and tho' mine iniquities have now juſtly cauſed thee to hide thy face from me (s), yet be thou rather pleaſed, agreeably to the gracious language of thy word, to hide thy face from my ſins, and to blot out all mine iniquities (t)! chear my heart with the tokens of thy returning favour, and ſay unto my ſoul, I am thy ſalvation (u)!

" Remember, O Lord God, remember that dreadful day, in which Jeſus thy dear ſon endured what my ſins have deſerved! remember that agony, in which he poured

[n] Pſal. xlii. 1. [o] Pſal. lxxvii. 7. (p) Job. xvi. 16. (q) 2 Pet. ii. 4. [r] Pſal. cxxiii. 3. (s) Iſa. lix. 2. (t) Pſal. li. 9. (u) Pſal. xxxv. 3.

red out his ſoul before thee, and ſaid, my God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me (x)! did he not, O Lord, endure all this, that humble penitents might thro' him be brought near unto thee, and might behold thee with pleaſure, as their father, and their God? Thus do I deſire to come unto thee, bleſſed ſaviour, art thou not appointed to give unto them that mourn in Zion, beauty for aſhes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praiſe for the ſpirit of heavineſs (y): O waſh away my tears, anoint my head with the oil of gladneſs, and clothe me with the garments of ſalvation (z)!

" Oh that I knew where I might find thee (a)! Oh that I knew what it is, that has engaged thee to depart from me! I am ſearching and trying my ways (b): Oh that thou wouldſt ſearch me, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts and if there be any wicked way in me, diſcover it, and lead me in the way everlaſting (c); in that way, in which I may find reſt and peace for my ſoul (d), and feel the diſcoveries of thy love in Chriſt!

" O God, who didſt command the light to ſhine out of darkneſs (e), ſpeak but the word, and light ſhall dart into my ſoul at once! open thou my lips, and my mouth ſhall ſhew forth thy praiſe (f) ſhall burſt out into a chearful ſong, which ſhall diſplay before thoſe, whom my preſent dejections may have diſcouraged, the pleaſures and ſupports of religion!

" Yet, Lord, on the whole, I ſubmit to thy will. If it is thus that my faith muſt be exerciſed, by walking in darkneſs for days and months, and years to come, how long ſoever they may ſeem, how long ſoever they may be, I will ſubmit. Still will I adore thee, as the God of Iſrael, and the ſaviour, tho' thou art a God that hideſt thyſelf (g): Still will I truſt in the name of the Lord, and ſtay myſelf upon my God (h); truſting in thee, tho' thou ſlay me (i); and waiting for thee, more than they that

[x] Mat. xxvii. 46. (y) Iſa. lxi. 3. (z) Iſa. lxi. 10 (a) Job. xxiii. 3. [b] Lam. iii. 40. (c) Pſal. cxxxix. 23, 24. [d] Jer. vi. 16. (e) 2. Cor iv. 6. [f] Pſal. li. 15. (g) Iſa. xlv. 15. (h) Iſa. l. 10. (i) Job. xiii. 15.

that watch for the morning, yea, more than they that watch for the morning (k). Peradventure in the evening time it may be light (l).———I know, that thou haſt ſometimes manifeſted thy compaſſions to thy dying ſervants, and given them, in the loweſt ebb of their natural ſpirits, a full tide of divine glory, thus turning darkneſs into light before them (m). So may it pleaſe thee to gild the valley of the ſhadow of death with the light of thy preſence, when I am paſſing thro' it, and to ſtretch forth thy rod and thy ſtaff to comfort me (n), that my tremblings may ceaſe, and the gloom may echo with ſongs of praiſe! But if it be thy ſovereign pleaſure, that diſtreſs and darkneſs ſhould ſtill continue to the laſt motion of my pulſe, and the laſt gaſp of my breath, Oh let it ceaſe with the parting ſtruggle, and bring me to that light which is ſown for the righteous, and to that gladneſs which is reſerved for the upright in heart (o); to the unclouded regions of everlaſting ſplendor and joy, where the full anointings of thy ſpirit ſhall be poured out on all thy people, and thou wilt no more hide thy face from any of them (p)!

"This, Lord, is thy ſalvation, for which I am waiting (q); and whilſt I feel the deſires of my ſoul drawn out after it, I will never deſpair of obtaining it. Continue and increaſe thoſe deſires, and at length ſatisfy and exceed them all, thro' the riches of thy grace in Chriſt Jeſus! *Amen.*"

[k] Pſal. cxx. x6. [l] Zech. xiv. 7. [m] Iſa. xlii. 16. [n] Pſal. xxiii. 4. [o] Pſal. xcvii. 11. [p] Ezek. xxxix. 19. [q] Gen. xlix. 18.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXV.

The Chriſtian ſtruggling under great and heavy Afflictions.

Here it is adviſed, (1.) *That afflictions ſhould be expected,* §. 1. (2.) *That the righteous hand of God ſhould be acknowledged in them, when they come.* §. 2. (3.) *That they ſhould be borne with patience.* §. 3. (4.) *That the divine conduct in them ſhould be cordially approved.* §. 4. (5.) *That thankfulneſs ſhould be maintained in the midſt of trials.* §. 5. (6.) *That the deſign of afflictions ſhould be diligently enquired into, and all proper aſſiſtance taken in diſcovering it.* §. 6. (7) *That when it is diſcovered, it ſhould humbly be complied with and anſwered.* §. 7. *A prayer ſuited to ſuch a caſe.*

§. 1. SINCE man is born unto trouble, as the ſparks fly upwards (a), and Adam has entailed on all his race the ſad inheritance of calamity in their way to death, it will certainly be prudent and neceſſary, that we ſhould all expect to meet with trials and afflictions; and that you, reader, whoever you are, ſhould be endeavouring to gird on your armour, and put yourſelf into a poſture to encounter thoſe trials, which will fall to your lot, as a man, and a chriſtian. Prepare yourſelf to receive your afflictions and to endure them, in a manner agreeable to both thoſe characters. In this view, when you ſee others under the burthen, conſider how poſſible it is, that you may be called out to the very ſame difficulties, or to others equal to them.——Put your ſoul, as in the place of theirs. Think, how you could endure the load under which they lie; and endeavour at once, to comfort them, and to ſtrengthen your own heart; or rather pray that God would do it. And obſerving how liable mortal life is to ſuch ſorrows, moderate your expectations from

(a) Job. v. 7.

from it; raiſe your thoughts above it; and form your ſchemes of happineſs, only for that world, where they cannot be diſappointed: In the mean time, bleſſing God, that your proſperity is lengthened out thus far, and aſcribing it to his ſpecial providence, that you continue ſo long unwounded, when ſo many ſhowers of arrows are flying around you, and ſo many are falling by them, on the right hand, and on the left.

§. 2. When at length your turn comes, as it certainly will, from the firſt hour in which an affliction ſeizes you, realize to yourſelf the hand of God in it, and loſe not the view of him in any ſecond cauſe, which may have proved the immediate occaſion. Let it be your firſt care, 'to humble yourſelf under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time (b).' own, that 'he is juſt in all that is brought upon you (c),' and that in all theſe things, 'he puniſhes you leſs than your iniquities deſerve (d).' Compoſe yourſelf to bear his hand with patience, to glorify his name by a ſubmiſſion to his will, and to fall in with the gracious deſign of this viſitation, as well as to wait the iſſue of it quietly, whatſoever the event may be.

§. 3. Now that patience may have its perfect work (e), reflect frequently, and deeply, upon your own meanneſs and ſinfulneſs. Conſider, how often every mercy has been forfeited, and every judgment deſerved. And conſider too, how long the patience of God hath born with you, and how wonderfully it is ſtill exerted towards you; and indeed, not only his patience, but his bounty too. Afflicted as you are, (for I ſpeak to you now as actually under the preſſure) look round and ſurvey your remaining mercies, and be gratefully ſenſible of them.—Make the ſuppoſition of their being removed: What if God ſhould ſtretch out his hand againſt you, and add poverty to pain, or pain to poverty, or the loſs of friends to both; or the death of ſurviving friends to that of thoſe whom you are now mourning over; would not the wound be more grievous? Adore his goodneſs, that this is not the caſe; and take heed, leſt your unthankfulneſs

(b) 1 Pet. v. 6. [c] Neh. ix. 33. [d] Ezra ix. 13. (e) James. i. 4.

ſhould provoke him to multiply your ſorrows. Conſider alſo the need you have of diſcipline; how wholeſome it may prove to your ſoul, and what merciful deſigns our heavenly father has, in all the corrections he ſends upon his children.

§. 4. Nay I will add, that in conſequence of all theſe conſiderations it may be well be expected, not only that you ſhould ſubmit to your afflictions as what you cannot avoid, but that you ſhould ſweetly aquieſce in them and approve them; that you ſhould not only juſtify, but glorify God in ſending them; that you ſhould glorify him with your heart, and with your lips too. Think not praiſe unſuitable, on ſuch an occaſion; nor think that praiſe alone to be ſuitable, which takes its riſe from remaining comforts: But know that it is your duty, not only to be thankful in your afflictions, but to be thankful on account of them.

§. 5. God himſelf has ſaid, in every thing give thanks (f); and he has taught his ſervants to ſay, yea, alſo we glory in tribulation (g). And moſt certain it is, that to true believers they are inſtances of divine mercy; for whom the Lord loveth he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every ſon, whom he receiveth with peculiar and diſtinguiſhing endearment (h). View your preſent afflictions in this light, as chaſtiſements of love; and then let your own heart ſay, whether love does not demand praiſe. Think with yourſelf, "it is thus that God is making me conformable to his own ſon; it is thus that he is training me up for compleat glory. Thus he kills my corruption; thus he ſtrengthens my grace; thus he is wiſely contriving to bring me nearer to himſelf, and to ripen me for the honours of his heavenly kingdom. It is if need be, that I am in heavineſs (i); and he ſurely knows what that need is, better than I can pretend to teach him; and knows what peculiar propriety there is in this affliction, to anſwer my preſent neceſſity, and do me that peculiar good which he is graciouſly intending me by it. This tribulation ſhall work patience, and patience experience, and experience a more aſſured hope; even a hope which ſhall

(f) 1 Theſ. v. 18. (g) Rom. x. 3. (h) Heb. xii. 6. (i) 1 Pet. i. 6.

ſhall not make aſhamed, while the love of God is ſhed abroad in my heart (k), and ſhines thro' my afflictions, like the ſun thro' a gentle deſcending cloud, darting in light upon the ſhade, and mingling fruitfulneſs with weeping."

§. 6. Let it be then your earneſt care, while you thus look on your affliction, whatever it may be, as coming from the hand of God, to improve it to the purpoſes for which it was ſent. And that you may ſo improve it, let it be your firſt concern, to know what thoſe purpoſes are. Summon up all the attention of your ſoul, to hear the rod, and him who hath appointed it (l); and pray earneſtly, that you may underſtand its voice. Examine your life, your words, and your heart; and pray, that God would ſo guide your enquiries, that you may return unto the Lord that ſmiteth you (m). To aſſiſt you in this, call in the help of pious friends, and particularly of your miniſters: Intreat, not only their prayers, but their advice too, as to the probable deſign of providence; and encourage them freely to tell you any thing which occurs to their minds upon this head. And if ſuch an occaſion ſhould lead them to touch upon ſome of the imperfections of your character and conduct, look upon it as a great token of their friendſhip, and take it, not only patiently, but thankfully. It does but ill become a chriſtian, at any time, to reſent reproofs and admonitions; and leaſt of all does it become him, when the rebukes of his heavenly father are upon him. He ought rather to ſeek admonitions, at ſuch a time as this, and voluntarily offer his wounds to be ſearched by a faithful and ſkilful hand.

§. 7. And when, by one means or another, you have got a ray of light to direct you in the meaning and language of ſuch diſpenſations, take heed, that you do not, in any degree, harden yourſelf againſt God, and walk contrary to him (n). Obſtinate reluctance to the apprehended deſign of any providental ſtroke is inexpreſſibly provoking to him. Set yourſelf therefore to an immediate reformation of whatever you diſcover amiſs;

[k] Rom. v. 3, 4, 5. [l] Mic. vi. 9. (m) Iſa. ix. 13. (n) Lev xxvi. 27.

and labour to learn the general leſſons of greater ſubmiſſion to God's will, of a more calm indifference to the world, and of a cloſer attachment to divine converſe and to the views of an approaching inviſible ſtate. And whatever particular proportion or correſpondence you may obſerve, between this or that circumſtance in your affliction, and your former tranſgreſſions, be eſpecially careful to act according to that more peculiar and expreſs voice of the rod. Then you may perhaps have ſpeedy and remarkable reaſon to ſay, that it hath been good for you that you have been afflicted (o); and with a multitude of others, may learn to number the times of your ſharpeſt trials, among the ſweeteſt and the moſt exalted moments of your life. For this purpoſe, let prayer be your frequent employment; and let ſuch ſentiments as theſe, if not in the very ſame terms, be often and affectionately poured out before God.

An humble Addreſs *to God, under the preſſure of heavy affliction.*

"O Thou ſupreme, yet all righteous and gracious governor of the whole univerſe! mean and inconſiderable as this little province of thy ſpacious empire may appear, thou doſt not diſregard the earth and its inhabitants; but attendeſt to its concerns with the moſt condeſcending and gracious regards. Thou reigneſt, and I rejoice in it, as it is indeed matter of univerſal joy (p). I believe thy univerſal providence and care; and I firmly believe thy wiſe, holy, and kind interpoſition in every thing which relates to me, and to the circumſtances of my abode in this world. I would look thro' all inferior cauſes unto thee, whoſe eyes are upon all thy creatures; to thee who formeſt the light, and createſt darkneſs, who makeſt peace, and createſt evil (q); to thee, Lord, who at thy pleaſure canſt exchange the one for the other, canſt turn the brighteſt noon into midnight, and the darkeſt midnight into noon.

"O thou wiſe and merciful governor of the world

(o) Pſal. cxix. 71. (p) Pſal. xcvii. 1. (q) Iſa. xlv. 7.

I have often ſaid Thy will be done: And now, thy will is painful to me. But ſhall I, upon that account unſay what I have ſo often ſaid? God, forbid! I come rather to lay myſelf down at thy feet, and to declare my full and free ſubmiſſion to all thy ſacred pleaſure. O Lord, thou art juſt and righteous in all! I acknowledge in thy venerable and awful preſence, that I have deſerved this, and ten thouſand times more (r); I acknowledge, that it is of thy mercy, that I am not utterly conſumed (s), and that any the leaſt degree of comfort yet remains. O Lord, I moſt readily confeſs, that the ſins of one day of my life have merited all theſe chaſtiſements; and that every day of my life hath been more or leſs ſinful. Smite therefore, O thou righteous judge! and I will ſtill adore thee, that inſtead of the ſcourge, thou haſt not given a commiſſion to the ſword, to do all the dreadful work of juſtice, and to pour out my blood in thy preſence.

"But ſhall I ſpeak unto thee, only as my judge? O Lord, thou haſt taught me a tenderer name: Thou condeſcendeſt to call thyſelf my father, and to ſpeak of correction as the effect of thy love. O welcome, welcome, thoſe afflictions, which are the tokens of thy paternal affection, the marks of my adoption into thy family! thou knoweſt, what diſcipline I need. Thou ſeeſt, O Lord, the bundle of folly, which there is in the heart of thy poor froward and thoughtleſs child; and knoweſt, what rods, and what ſtrokes are needful to drive it away. I would therefore be in humble ſubjection to the father of ſpirits, who chaſteneth me for my profit; would be in ſubjection to him, and live (t). I would bear thy ſtrokes, not merely becauſe I cannot reſiſt them, but becauſe I love and truſt in thee. I would ſweetly acquieſce and reſt in thy will, as well as ſtoop to it; and would ſay good is the word of the Lord (u). And I deſire, that not only my lips, but my ſoul may acquieſce. Yea, Lord, I would praiſe thee, that thou wilt ſhew ſo much regard to me, as to apply ſuch remedies as theſe to the diſeaſe of my mind, and art thus careful to train me up

[r] Ezra ix. 13. [s] Lam. iii. 22. [t] Heb. xii. 9, 11. [u] 2 Kings xx. 19. [x] John xviii. 11.

for glory. I have no objection againſt being afflicted, againſt being afflicted in this particular way. The cup which my father puts into mine hand, ſhall I not drink it (x)? By thine aſſiſtance and ſupport I will. Only be pleaſed, O Lord, to ſtand by me, and ſometimes to grant me a favourable look in the midſt of my ſufferings! ſupport my ſoul, I beſeech thee, by thy conſolations mingled with my tribulations; and I ſhall glory in thoſe tribulations that are thus allayed! it has been the experience of many, who have reflected on afflicted days with pleaſure, and have acknowledged that their comforts have ſwallowed up their ſorrows. And after all that thou haſt done, are thy mercies reſtrained (y)? Is thy hand waxed ſhort (z)? or canſt thou not ſtill do the ſame for me?

"If my heart be leſs tender, leſs ſenſible, thou canſt cure that diſorder, and canſt make this affliction the means of curing it. Thus let it be; and at length in thine own due time, and in the way which thou ſhalt chuſe, work out deliverance for me; and ſhew me thy marvellous loving-kindneſs, O thou that ſaveſt by thy right hand them that put their truſt in thee (a)! for I well know, that how dark ſoever this night of affliction ſeems, if thou ſayeſt, let there be light there ſhall be light. But I would urge nothing, before the time thy wiſdom and goodneſs ſhall appoint. I am much more concerned, that my afflictions may be ſanctified, than that they may be removed. Number me, O God, among the happy perſons, whom whilſt thou chaſteneſt, Thou teacheſt out of thy law (b)! ſhew me, I beſeech thee, wherefore thou contendeſt with me (c); and purify me by the fire, which is ſo painful to me, while I am paſſing thro' it! doſt thou not chaſten thy children for this very end, that they may be partakers of thine holineſs (d)! thou knoweſt, O God, it is this my ſoul is breathing after. I am partaker of thy bounty, every day and moment of life: I am partaker of thy goſpel, and I hope, in ſome meaſure too, a partaker of the grace of it operating on

[x] John xviii. 11. [y] Iſa. lxiii. 15. [z] Num. xi. 23. [a] Pſal. xvii. 7. [b] Pſal. xciv. 12. [c] Job x. 2. [d] Heb. xii. 10.

on my heart: Oh may it operate more and more, that I may largely partake of thine holineſs to; that I may come nearer and nearer in the temper of my mind to thee, O bleſſed God, the ſupreme model of perfection! let my ſoul be (as it were) melted, tho' with the intenſeſt heat of the furance, if I may but thereby be made fit for being delivered into the model of thy goſpel, and bearing thy bright and amiable image!

"O Lord, my ſoul longeth for thee: it crieth out for the living God (e)! in thy preſence, and under the ſupport of thy love, I can bear any thing; and am willing to bear it, if I may grow more lovely in thine eyes, and more meet for thy kingdom. The days of my affliction will have an end; the hour will at length come, when thou wilt pipe away all my tears (f). Tho' it tarry, I would wait for it (g). My fooliſh heart, in the midſt of all its trials, is ready to grow fond of this earth, diſappointing and grievous as it is: And graciouſly, O God, doſt thou deal with me, in breaking theſe bonds that would tie me faſter to it. Oh let my ſoul be girding itſelf up, and (as it were) ſtretching its wings, in expectation of that bleſſed hour, when it ſhall drop all its ſorrows and incumbrances at once, and ſoar away to expatiate with infinite delight in the regions of liberty, peace, and joy! *Amen.*"

(e) Pſal. lxxxiv. 2. (f) Rev. xxi. 4. (g) Hab. ii. 3.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVI.

The Chriſtian aſſiſted in examining into his Growth in Grace.

The examination important. §. 1. *Falſe marks of growth to be avoided.* §. 2. *True marks propoſed; ſuch as,* (1.) *Increaſing love to God.* §. 3. (2.) *Benevolence to men.* §. 4. (3.) *Candour of diſpoſition.* §. 5. (4.) *Meekneſs under injuries.* §. 6. (5.) *Serenity amidſt the uncertainties of life.* §. 7. (6.) *Humanity,* §. 8. *eſpecially as expreſſed in Evangelical exerciſes of mind towards Chriſt and the ſpirit.* §. 9. (7.) *Zeal for the divine honour.* §. 10. (8.) *Habitual and chearful willingneſs to exchange worlds, whenever God ſhall appoint.* §. 11. *Concluſion.* §. 12. *The chriſtian breathing after growth in grace.*

§. 1. IF by divine grace you have been born again, not of corruptible ſeed, but of incorruptible (a), even by that word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever, not only in the world and the church, but in particular ſouls in which it is ſown; you will, as new born babes deſire the ſincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby (b). And tho' in the moſt advanced ſtate of religion on earth, we are but infants in compariſon of what we hope to be, when in the heavenly world, we arrive unto a perfect man, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt (c); yet as we have ſome exerciſe of a ſanctified reaſon, we ſhall be ſolicitous that we may be growing and thriving infants. And you, my reader, if ſo be that you have taſted that the Lord is gracious (d), will, I doubt not, feel this ſolicitude. I would therefore endeavour to aſſiſt you in making the enquiry whether religion be on the advance in your ſoul. And here, I ſhall warn you againſt

(a) 1 Pet. i. 23. (b) 1 Pet. ii. 2. (c) Eph. iv. 13.
(d) 1 Pet. ii. 3.

gainſt ſome falſe marks of growth; and then, ſhall endeavour to lay down others on which you may depend as more ſolid.—In this view I would obſerve, that you are not to meaſure your growth in grace, only or chiefly by your advances in knowledge, or in zeal, or any other paſſionate impreſſion of the mind; no, nor by the fervour of devotion alone; but 'by the habitual determination of the will for God, and by your prevailing diſpoſition to obey his commands, to ſubmit to his diſpoſals, and to ſubſerve his ſchemes in the world.'

§. 2. It muſt be allowed, that knowledge, and affection in religion, are indeed deſireable. Without ſome degree of the former, religion cannot be rational; and it is very reaſonable to believe, that without ſome degree of the latter, it cannot be ſincere, in creatures whoſe natures are conſtituted like ours. Yet there may be a great deal of ſpeculative knowledge, and a great deal of rapturous affection, where there is no true religion at all; and therefore much more, where there is no advanced ſtate in it. The exerciſe of our rational faculties, upon the evidences of divine revelation, and upon the declaration of it as contained in ſcripture, may furniſh a very wicked man with a well digeſted body of orthodox divinity in his head, when not one ſingle doctrine of it has ever reached his heart. An eloquent deſcription of the ſufferings of Chriſt, of the ſolemnities of judgment, of the joys of the bleſſed, of the miſeries of the damned, might move the breaſt even of a man who did not firmly believe them; as we often find ourſelves ſtrongly moved by well-wrought narrations, or diſcourſes, which at the ſame time we know to have their foundation in fiction. Natural conſtitution, or ſuch accidental cauſes as are ſome of them too low to be here mentioned, may ſupply the eyes with a flood of tears, which may diſcharge itſelf plenteouſly upon almoſt any occaſion that ſhall firſt ariſe. And a proud impatience of contradiction, directly oppoſite as it is to the gentle ſpirit of chriſtianity, may make a man's blood boil, when he hears the notions he has entertained, and eſpecially thoſe which he

he has openly and vigorouſly eſpouſed, diſputed, and oppoſed. This may poſſibly lead him, in terms of ſtrong indignation, to pour out his zeal and his rage before God, in a fond conceit, that, as the God of truth, he is the pattern of thoſe fond doctrines, by whoſe fair appearances perhaps he himſelf is miſled.—And if theſe ſpeculative refinements, or theſe affectionate ſallies of the mind, be conſiſtent with a total abſence of true religion, they are much more apparently conſiſtent with a very low eſtate of it. I would deſire to lead you, my friend, into ſublimer notions and juſter marks; and refer you to other practical writers, and above all to the book of God, to prove how material they are. I would therefore intreat you, to bring your heart to anſwer, as in the preſence of God, to ſuch enquiries as theſe.

§. 3. Do you find 'divine love, on the whole, advancing in your ſoul?' Do you feel yourſelf more and more ſenſible of the preſence of God; and does that ſenſe grow more delightful to you, than it formerly was? Can you, even when your natural ſpirits are weak and low, and you are not in any frame for the ardors and extaſies of devotion, nevertheleſs find a pleaſing reſt, a calm repoſe of heart, in the thought that God is near you, and that he ſees the ſecret ſentiments of your ſoul; while you are, as it were, labouring up the hill, and caſting a longing eye towards him, tho' you cannot ſay you enjoy any ſenſible communications from him? Is it agreeable to you to open your heart to his inſpection and regard, to preſent it to him laid bare of every diſguiſe, and to ſay with David, Thou, Lord, knoweſt thy ſervant (e)? Do you find a growing eſteem and approbation of that ſacred law of God, which is the tranſcript of his moral perfections? Do you inwardly eſteem all his precepts concerning all things to be right (f)? Do you diſcern, not only the neceſſity, but the reaſonableneſs, the beauty, the pleaſure of obedience; and feel a growing ſcorn and contempt of thoſe things, which may be offered as the price of your

[e] 2 Sam. vii. 20. (f) Pſal. cxix. 128.

your innocence, and would tempt you to ſacrifice or to hazard your intereſt in the divine favour and friendſhip? Do you find an ingenuous deſire to pleaſe God; not only, becauſe he is ſo powerful and has ſo many good and ſo many evil things entirely at his command, but from a veneration of his moſt amiable nature and character; and do you find your heart habitually reconciled to a moſt humble ſubjection, both to his commanding, and to his diſpoſing will? Do you perceive, that your own will is now more ready and diſpoſed, in every circumſtance, to bear the yoke, and to ſubmit to the divine determination, whatever he appoint to be born or forborn? Can you in patience poſſeſs your ſoul (g)? Can you maintain a more ſteady calmneſs and ſerenity, when God is ſtriking at your deareſt enjoyments in this world, and acting moſt directly contrary to your preſent intereſts, to your natural paſſions and deſires? If you can, it is a moſt certain and noble ſign, that grace is grown up in you to a very vigorous ſtate.

§. 4. Examine alſo, 'what affections you find in your heart towards thoſe who are round about you, and towards the reſt of mankind in general.'——Do you find your heart overflow with undiſſembled and unreſtrained benevolence? Are you more ſenſible than you once were, of thoſe many endearing bonds, which unite all men, and eſpecially all chriſtians, into one community; which make them brethren and fellow-citizens? Do all the unfriendly paſſions die and wither in your ſoul, while the kind ſocial affections grow and ſtrengthen? And tho' ſelf-love was never the reigning paſſion, ſince you became a true chriſtian; yet as ſome remainders of it are ſtill too ready to work inwardly, and to ſhew themſelves, eſpecially as ſudden occaſions ariſe, do you perceive that you get ground of them? Do you think of yourſelf only as one of a great number, whoſe particular intereſts and concerns are of little importance when compared with thoſe of the community, and ought by all means, on all occaſions, to be ſacrificed to them?

§. 5.

(g) Luke xxi. 19.

§. 5. Reflect eſpecially 'on the temper of your mind towards thoſe, whom an unſanctified heart might be ready to imagine, it had ſome juſt excuſe for excepting out of the liſt of thoſe it loves, and towards whom you are ready to feel a ſecret averſion, or at leaſt an alienation from them.'——How does your mind ſtand affected towards thoſe who differ from you in their religious ſentiments and practices? I do not ſay, that chriſtian charity will require you, to think every error harmleſs. It argues no want of love to a friend in ſome caſes, to fear leſt his diſorder ſhould prove more fatal than he ſeems to imagine; nay ſometimes, the very tenderneſs of friendſhip may increaſe that apprehenſion. But to hate perſons becauſe we think they are miſtaken, and to aggravate every difference in judgment or practice, into a fatal and damnable error that deſtroys all chriſtian communion and love, is a ſymptom generally much worſe than the evil it condemns. Do you love the image of Chriſt in a perſon who thinks himſelf obliged in conſcience to profeſs and worſhip in a manner different from yourſelf? Nay further, can you love and honour that which is truly amiable and excellent in thoſe, in whom much is defective; in thoſe, in whom there is a mixture of bigotry and narrowneſs of ſpirit, which may lead them perhaps to ſlight, or even to cenſure you? Can you love them, as the diſciples and ſervants of Chriſt, who thro' a miſtaken zeal may be ready to caſt out your name as evil (h), and to warn others againſt you as a dangerous perſon? This is none of the leaſt triumphs of charity, nor any deſpicable evidence of an advance in religion.

§. 6. And, on this head, reflect farther, 'how can you bear injuries?'——There is a certain hardineſs of ſoul in this reſpect, which argues a confirmed ſtate in piety and virtue. Does every thing of this kind hurry and ruffle you, ſo as to put you to contrivances, how you may diſgrace and expoſe him, who has done you the wrong? Or can you ſtand the ſhock calmly, and eaſily divert your mind to other objects, only (when you

[h] Luke vi. 22.

you recollect theſe things,) pitying and praying for thoſe, who with the worſt tempers and views are aſſaulting you? This is a Chriſt-like temper indeed, and he will own it as ſuch; will own you as one of his ſoldiers, as one of his heroes; eſpecially if it riſes ſo far, as inſtead of being overcome of evil, to overcome evil with good (i). Watch over your ſpirit, and over your tongue, when injuries are offered; and ſee whether you be ready to meditate upon them, to aggravate them to yourſelf, to complain of them to others, and to lay on all the load of blame that you in juſtice can: Or, whether you be ready to put the kindeſt conſtruction upon the offence, to excuſe it as far as reaſon will allow, and (where after all, it will wear a black and odious aſpect) to forgive it, heartily to forgive it, and that even before any ſubmiſſion is made, or pardon aſked; and in token of the ſincerity of that forgiveneſs, to be contriving what can be done, by ſome benefit or other towards the injurious perſon, to teach him a better temper.

§. 7. Examine farther, 'with regard to the other evils and calamities of life, and even with regard to its uncertainties, how can you bear them?' Do you find your ſoul is in this reſpect gathering ſtrength? Have you fewer foreboding fears and diſquieting alarms, than you once had, as to what may happen in life? Can you truſt the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, to order your affairs for you, with more complacency and chearfulneſs than formerly? Do you find, you are able to unite your thoughts more in ſurveying preſent circumſtances, that you may collect immediate duty from them, tho' you know not what God will next appoint or call you to? And when you feel the ſmart of affliction, do you make a leſs matter of it? Can you transfer your heart more eaſily to heavenly and divine objects, without an anxious ſolicitude, whether this or that burthen be removed, ſo it may but be ſanctified to promote your communion with God and your ripeneſs for glory?

§. 8. Examine alſo, 'whether you advance in humility.' This is a ſilent, but moſt excellent grace; and they

[i] Rom. xii. 21.

who are moſt eminent in it, are deareſt to God, and moſt fit for the communications of his preſence to them. Do you then feel your mind more emptied of proud and haughty imaginations; not prone ſo much to look back upon paſt ſervices, which it has performed, as forward to thoſe which are yet before you, and inward upon the remaining imperfections of your heart? Do you more tenderly obſerve your daily ſlips and miſcarriages, and find yourſelf diſpoſed to mourn over thoſe things before the Lord, that once paſſed with you as ſlight matters; tho' when you come to ſurvey them, as in the preſence of God, you find they were not wholly involuntary, or free from guilt? Do you feel in your breaſt a deeper apprehenſion of the infinite majeſty of the bleſſed God, and of the glory of his natural and moral perfections; ſo as, in conſequence of theſe views, to perceive yourſelf (as it were) annihilated in his preſence, and to ſhrink into leſs than nothing, and vanity (k)? If this be your temper, God will look upon you with particular favour, and will viſit you more and more with the diſtinguiſhed bleſſings of his grace.

§. 9. But there is another great branch and effect of chriſtian humility, which it would be an unpardonable negligence to omit. Let me therefore farther enquire: Are you more frequently renewing your application, your ſincere, ſteady, determinate application, to the righteouſneſs and blood of Chriſt, as being ſenſible how unworthy you are to appear before God, otherwiſe than in him? And do the remaining corruptions of your heart humble you before him, tho' the diſorders of your life are in a great meaſure cured? Are you more earneſt to obtain the quickening influences of the holy Spirit; and have you ſuch a ſenſe of your own weakneſs, as to engage you to depend, in all the duties you perform, upon the communications of his grace to help your infirmities (l)? Can you, at the cloſe of your moſt religious, exemplary, and uſeful days, bluſh before God for the deficiencies of them, while others perhaps may be ready to admire and extol your conduct? And while you give the glory of all that has been right to him, from whom

(k) Iſa. xl. 17. (l) Rom. viii. 26.

whom the ſtrength and grace has been derived, are you coming to the blood of ſprinkling, to free you from the guilt which mingles itſelf even with the beſt of your ſervices? Do you learn to receive the bounties of providence, not only with thankfulneſs as coming from God, but with a mixture of ſhame and confuſion too, under a conſciouſneſs that you do not deſerve them, and are continually forfeiting them? And do you juſtify providence in your afflictions and diſappointments, even while many are flouriſhing around you in the full bloom of proſperity, whoſe offences have been more viſible at leaſt, and more notorious than yours?

§. 10. Do you alſo advance in "zeal and activity, for the ſervice of God, and the happineſs of mankind?" Does your love ſhew itſelf ſolid and ſincere, by a continual flow of good works from it? Can you view the ſorrows of others with tender compaſſion, and with projects and contrivances what you may do to relieve them? Do you feel in your breaſt, that you are more frequently deviſing liberal things (m), and ready to wave your own advantage or pleaſure that you may accompliſh them? Do you find your imaginations teeming (as it were) with conceptions and ſchemes, for the advancement of the cauſe and intereſt of Chriſt in the world, for the propagation of his goſpel, and for the happineſs of your fellow-creatures? And do you not only pray, but act for it; act in ſuch a manner, as to ſhew that you pray in earneſt, and feel a readineſs to do what little you can in this cauſe, even tho' others, who might, if they pleaſed, very conveniently do a vaſt deal more, will do nothing?

§. 11. And, not to enlarge on this copious, head, reflect once more, "how your affections ſtand, with regard to this world, and another? Are you more deeply and practically convinced of the vanity of theſe things which are ſeen and are temporal (n)? Do you perceive your expectations from them, and your attachments to them, to diminiſh? You are willing to ſtay in this world, as long as your Father pleaſes; and it is right and well:

[m] Iſa. xxxii. 8. [n] 2 Cor. iv. 18.

But do you find your bonds ſo looſened to it, that you are willing, heartily willing, to leave it at the ſhorteſt warning; ſo that if God ſhould ſee fit to ſummon you away on a ſudden, tho' it ſhould be in the midſt of your enjoyments, purſuits, expectations, and hopes, you would cordially conſent to that remove; without ſaying, 'Lord, let me ſtay a little while longer, to enjoy this or that agreeable entertainment, to finiſh this or that ſcheme?' Can you think with an habitual calmneſs and hearty approbation, if ſuch be the divine pleaſure, of waking no more when you lie down on your bed, of returning home no more when you go out of your houſe? And yet, on the other hand, how great ſoever the burthens of life are, do you find a willingneſs to bear them, in ſubmiſſion to the will of your heavenly Father, tho' it ſhould be to many future years; and tho' they ſhould be years of far greater affliction, than you have ever yet ſeen? Can you ſay calmly and ſteadily, if not with ſuch overflowings of tender affections as you could deſire, 'Behold, thy ſervant, thy child, is in thine hand, do with me as ſeemeth good in thy ſight (o)! My will is melted into thine, to be lifted up or laid down, to be carried out or brought in, to be here or there, in this, or that circumſtance, juſt as thou pleaſeſt, and as ſhall beſt ſuit with thy great extenſive plan, which it is impoſſible that I, or all the angels in heaven, ſhould mend.'

§. 12. Theſe, if I underſtand matters aright, are ſome of the moſt ſubſtantial evidences of growth and eſtabliſhment in religion. Search after them: Bleſs God for them, ſo far as you diſcover them in yourſelf; and ſtudy to advance in them daily, under the influences of divine grace, to which I heartily recommend you, and to which I intreat you frequently to recommend yourſelf.

The Chriſtian *breathing earneſtly after Growth in Grace.*

"O Thou ever bleſſed fountain of natural and ſpiritual life! I thank thee that I live, and know the exerciſes and pleaſures of a religious life, I bleſs thee,

[o] 2 Sam. xv. 26.

thee, that thou haſt infuſed into me thine own vital breath, tho' I was once dead in treſpaſſes and ſins (p); ſo that I am become, in a ſenſe peculiar to thine own children, a living ſoul (q). But it is mine earneſt deſire, that I may not only live, but grow; grow in grace, and in the knowledge of my Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt (r), upon an acquaintance with whom my progreſs in it ſo evidently depends! in this view I humbly intreat thee, that thou wilt form my mind to right notions in religion, that I may not judge of grace by any wrong conceptions of it, nor meaſure my advances in it by thoſe things which are merely the effects of nature, and poſſibly its corrupt effects?

"May I be ſeeking after an increaſe of divine love to thee, my God and Father in Chriſt, of unreſerved reſignation to thy wiſe and holy will, and of extenſive benevolence to my fellow-creatures! may I grow in patience and fortitude of ſoul, in humility and zeal, in ſpirituality and a heavenly diſpoſition of mind, and in a concern, that whether preſent or abſent I may be accepted of the Lord (s), that whether I live or die it may be for his glory! in a word, as thou knoweſt I hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs, make me whatever thou wouldſt delight to ſee me! Draw on my ſoul, by the gentle influences of thy gracious ſpirit, every trace and every feature, which thine eye, O heavenly Father, may ſurvey with pleaſure, and which thou mayeſt acknowledge as thine own image!

"I am ſenſible, O Lord, I have not as yet attained! Yea, my ſoul is utterly confounded to think, how far I am from being already perfect: But this one thing, (after the great example of thine Apoſtle, and the much greater of his Lord) I would endeavour to do; forgetting the things which are behind, I would preſs forward to thoſe which are before (t). Oh that thou wouldſt feed my ſoul by thy word and ſpirit! having been, as I humbly hope and truſt, regenerated by it, being born again, not of corruptible ſeed, but of incorruptible,

[p] Eph. ii. 1. [q] Gen. ii. 7. [r] 2 Pet. iii. 18.
[s] 2 Cor. v. 9. [t] Phil. iii. 12, 13.

even by thy word which liveth and abideth for ever (u): as a new born babe I desire the sincere milk of the word, that I may grow thereby (x). And may my profiting appear unto all men (y), till at length I come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (z); and after having enjoyed the pleasure of those that flourish eminently in thy courts below, be fixed in the paradise above! I ask and hope it thro' him of whose fulness we have all received, even grace for grace (a): To him be glory, both now and for ever (b)! *Amen.*"

(u) 1 Pet. iv. 23. (x) 1 Pet ii. 2. (y) 1 Tim. iv. 15.
(z) Eph. iv. 13. (a) John i, 16. (b) 2 Pet. iii. 18.

CHAP. XXVII.

The advanced Christian reminded of the Mercies of God, and exhorted to the Exercises of habitual Love to him, and Joy in him.

An holy joy in God, our privilege as well as our duty.— §. 1. *The christian invited to the exercise of it:* §. 2. (1.) *By the representation of temporal mercies.* §. 3. (2.) *By the consideration of spiritual favours.* §. 4.— (3.) *By the views of eternal happiness.* §. 5. *And,* (4.) *Of the mercies of God to others, the living, and the dead.* §. 6. *The chapter closes with an exhortation to this heavenly exercise,* §. 7. *and with an example of the genuine workings of this grateful joy in God.*

§. 1. I would now suppose my reader to find, on an examination of his spiritual state, that he is growing in grace. And if you desire, that this growth may at once be acknowledged and promoted, let me call your soul to that more affectionate exercise of love to God and joy in him, which suits, and strengthens, and

and exalts the character of the advanced chriſtian; and which I beſeech you to regard, not only as your privilege, but as your duty too. Love is the moſt ſublime generous principle of all true and acceptable obedience; and with love, when ſo wiſely and happily fixed, when ſo certainly returned, joy, proportionable joy, muſt naturally be connected. It may juſtly grieve a man that enters into the ſpirit of chriſtianity, to ſee how low a life the generality even of ſincere chriſtians commonly live in this reſpect. Rejoice then in the Lord, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holineſs (a), and of all thoſe other perfections and glories, which are included in that majeſtic, that wonderful, that delightful name, the Lord thy God, ! ſpend not your ſacred moments merely in confeſſion, or in petition tho' each muſt have their daily ſhare: But give a part, a conſiderable part, to the celeſtial and angelic work of praiſe. Yea, labour to carry about with you continually an heart overflowing with ſuch ſentiments, warmed and inflamed with ſuch affections.

§. 2. Are there not continually rays enough diffuſed from the great father of light and love, to kindle it in our boſom? Come, my chriſtian friend and brother, come and ſurvey with me the goodneſs of our heavenly father. And Oh that he would give me ſuch a ſenſe of it, that I might repreſent it in a ſuitable manner; that while I am muſing the fire may burn in my own heart (b), and be communicated to yours! and Oh that it might paſs with the lines I write, from ſoul to ſoul; awakening in the breaſt of every chriſtian that reads them, ſentiments more worthy of the children of God, and the heirs of glory; who are to ſpend an eternity in thoſe ſacred exerciſes, to which I am now endeavouring to excite you!

§. 3. Have you not reaſon to adopt the words of David, and ſay, 'how many are thy gracious thoughts unto me, O Lord! how great is the ſum of them! when I would count them, they are more in number than the ſand (c).' You indeed know where to begin the ſurvey; for the favours of God to you begun with your being.—

Comemorate

[a] Pſal. xcvii. 12. (b) Pſal. xxxix. 3. [c] Pſal. cxxxix. 17, 18.

Commemorate it therefore with a grateful heart, that the eyes which ſaw your ſubſtance, being yet imperfect, beheld you with a friendly care, when you were made in ſecret, and have watched over you ever ſince; and that the hand, which drew the plan of your members, when as yet there was none of them (d), not only faſhioned them at firſt, but from that time has been concerned in keeping all your bones, ſo that not one of them is broken (e); and that indeed, it is to this you owe it, that you live.—Look back upon the path you have trod, from the day that God brought you out of the womb, and ſay, whether you do not, as it were, ſee all the road thick ſet with the marks and memorials of the divine goodneſs. Recollect the places where you have lived, and the perſons with whom you have moſt intimately converſed; and call to mind the mercies you have received in thoſe places, and from thoſe perſons, as the inſtruments of the divine care and goodneſs. Recollect the difficulties and dangers, with which you have been ſurrounded; and reflect attentively on what God hath done to defend you from them, or to carry you thro' them. Think, how often there has been but a ſtep between you and death; and how ſuddenly God hath ſometimes interpoſed to ſet you in ſafety, even before you apprehended danger. Think of thoſe chambers of illneſs, in which you have been confined, and from whence perhaps you once thought you ſhould go forth no more; but ſaid (with Hezekiah) in the cutting off of my days I ſhall go to the gates of the grave, I am deprived of the reſidue of my years (f). God has, it may be, ſince that time, added many years to your life; and you know not how many may be in reſerve, or how much uſefulneſs and happineſs may attend each. Survey your circumſtances in relative life; how many kind friends are ſurrounding you daily, and ſtudying how they may contribute to your comfort. Reflect on thoſe remarkable circumſtances in providence, which occaſioned the knitting of ſome bonds of this kind, which next to thoſe which join your ſoul to God, you number among the happieſt. And forget not, in how many inſtances, when

[d] Pſal. cxxxix. 15, 16. [e] Pſal. xxiv. 20. (f) Iſa. xxxviii. 10.

when theſe dear lives have been threatened, lives perhaps more ſenſibly dear than your own, God hath given them back from the borders of the grave, and ſo added new endearments ariſing from that tender circumſtance to all your after converſe with them. Nor forget, in how gracious a manner he hath ſupported ſome others in their laſt moments, and enabled them to leave behind a ſweet odour of piety, which hath embalmed their memories, revived you when ready to faint under the ſorrows of the firſt ſeparation, and, on the whole made even the recollection of their death delightful.

§. 4. But it is more than time, that I lead on your thoughts to the many ſpiritual mercies which God hath beſtowed upon you. Look back, as it were, to the rock from whence you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence you were digged (g). Reflect ſeriouſly on the ſtate, wherein divine grace found you: Under how much guilt; under how much pollution! in what danger; in what ruin! think what was, and Oh think with yet deeper reflection, what would have been the caſe! the eye of God, which penetrates into eternity; ſaw what your mind, amuſed with the trifles of preſent time and ſenſual gratification, was utterly ignorant and regardleſs of: It ſaw you on the borders of eternity, and pitied you; ſaw, that you would in a little time have been ſuch a helpleſs, wretched creature, as the ſinner that is juſt now dead, and has to his infinite ſurprize and everlaſting terror met his unexpected doom, and would like him ſtand thunder ſtruck in aſtoniſhment and deſpair.—This God ſaw, and he pitied you; and being merciful to you, he provided in the counſels of his eternal love and grace a redeemer for you, and purchaſed you to himſelf with the blood of his Son: A price, which if you will pauſe upon it, and think ſeriouſly what it was, muſt ſurely affect you to ſuch a degree, as to make you fall down before God in wonder and ſhame, to think that it ſhould ever have been given for you. To accompliſh theſe bleſſed purpoſes, he ſent his grace into your heart ſo that tho' you were once darkneſs, you are now light in the Lord

(g) Iſa. li. 1.

Lord (h). He made that happy change which you now feel in your ſoul, and by his holy ſpirit which is given to you he ſhed abroad that principle of love (i), which is inkindled by this review, and now flames with greater ardor than before. Thus far he hath ſupported you in your chriſtian courſe; and 'having obtained help from him it is, that you continue even to this day (k). He hath not only bleſſed you, but made you a bleſſing (l): And tho' you have not been ſo uſeful, as that holy generoſity of heart, which he has excited, would have engaged you to deſire; yet ſome good you have done in the ſtation in which he has fixed you. Some of your brethren of mankind have been relieved, perhaps too ſome thoughtleſs creature reclaimed to virtue and happineſs, by his bleſſing on your endeavours. Some in the way to heaven are praiſing God for you; and ſome perhaps already there, are longing for your arrival, that they may thank you in nobler and more expreſſive forms for benefits, the importance of which they now ſufficiently underſtand, tho' while here they could never conceive it.

§. 5. Chriſtian, look round on the numberleſs bleſſings of one kind and of another, with which you are already encompaſſed; and advance your proſpect ſtill farther, to what faith yet diſcovers within the veil. Think of thoſe now unknown tranſports, with which thou ſhalt drop every burthen in the grave, and thine immortal ſpirit ſhall mount, light and joyful, holy and happy, to God, its original, its ſupport, and its hope; to God, the ſource of being, of holineſs, and of pleaſure; to Jeſus, thro' whom all theſe mercies are derived to thee, and who will appoint thee a throne near his own, to be for ever the ſpectator and partaker of his glory. Think of the rapture, with which thou ſhalt attend his triumph in the reſurrection day, and receive this poor mouldering corruptible body transformed into his glorious image; and then think, "Theſe hopes are not mine alone, but the hopes of thouſands and millions. Multitudes, whom I number among the deareſt of my friends upon earth, are rejoicing with me in theſe apprehenſions and views: And God gives

(h) Eph. v. 8. (i) Rom. v. 5. [k] Acts xxvi. 22. [l] Gen. xii. 2.

gives me ſometimes to ſee the ſmiles on their cheeks, the ſweet humble hope that ſparkles in their eyes, and ſhines thro' the tears of tender gratitude; and to hear that little of their inward complacency and joy, which language can expreſs. Yea, and multitudes more, who were once equally dear to me with theſe, tho' I have laid them in the grave, and wept over their duſt, are living to God, living in the poſſeſſion of inconceivable delights, and drinking large draughts of the water of life, which flows in perpetual ſtreams at his right hand."

§. 6. O chriſtian, thou art ſtill intimately united and allied to them. Death cannot break a friendſhip thus cemented, and it ought not to render thee inſenſible of the happineſs of thoſe friends, for whoſe memory thou retained ſo juſt an honour. They live to God, as his ſervants; they ſerve him, and ſee his face (m); and they make but a ſmall part of that glorious aſſembly. Millions equally worthy of thine eſteem and affection with themſelves, inhabit thoſe bliſsful regions: And wilt thou not rejoice in their joy? and wilt thou not adore that everlaſting ſpring of holineſs and happineſs, from whence each of theſe ſtreams is derived yea, I will add, while the bleſſed Angels are ſo kindly regarding us, while they are miniſtring to thee, O chriſtian, and bearing thee in their arms, as an heir of Salvation (n), wilt thou not rejoice in their felicity too; and wilt thou not adore that God, who gives them all the ſuperior glory of their more exalted nature, and gives them a heaven, which fills them with bleſſedneſs, even while they ſeem to withdraw from it, that they may attend on thee?

§. 7. This, and infinitely more than this, the bleſſed God, is, and was, and ſhall ever be. The felicities of the bleſſed ſpirits that ſurround his th[illegible] and thy felicities, O chriſtian, are immortal. [illegible]eavenly luminiaries ſhall glow with an undeca[illegible]ing flame; and thou ſhalt ſhine and burn among them, when the ſun and the ſtars are gone out. Still ſhall the unchanging father of lights pour forth his beams upon them; and the luſtre they reflect from him, and their happineſs in him, ſhall be everlaſting,

(m) Rev. xxii. 3, 4. (n) Heb. i. 14.

laſting, ſhall be ever growing. Bow down, O thou child of God, thou heir of glory, bow down and let all that is within thee unite in one act of grateful love; and let all that is around thee, all that is before thee in the proſpects of an unbounded eternity, concur to elevate and tranſport thy ſoul: that thou mayeſt as faſt as poſſible, begin the work and bleſſedneſs of heaven, in falling down before the God of it, in opening thine heart to his gracious influences, and in breathing out before him that incenſe of praiſe, which theſe warm beams of his preſence and love have ſo great a tendency to produce, and to ennoble with a fragrancy reſembling that of his paradiſe above.

The grateful ſoul rejoicing *in the bleſſings of providence and grace, and pouring out itſelf before God in vigorous and affectionate exerciſes of* love *and* praiſe.

O My God, it is enough! I have muſed, and the fire burneth (o)! But oh, in what language ſhall the flame break forth! What can I ſay but this, that my heart admires thee, and adores thee, and loves thee! my little veſſel is as full as it can hold; and I would pour out all that fulneſs before thee, that it may grow capable of receiving more and more. Thou art my hope, and my help; my glory, and the lifter up of my head (p). My heart rejoiceth in thy Salvation (q); and when I ſet myſelf under the influences of thy good ſpirit, to converſe with thee, a thouſand delightful thoughts ſpring up at once; a thouſand ſources of pleaſure are unſealed, and flow in upon my ſoul with ſuch refreſhment and joy, that they ſeem to croud into every moment the happineſs of days, and weeks and months.

I bleſs thee, O God, for this ſoul of mine, which thou haſt created; which thou haſt taught to ſay and I hope to the happieſt purpoſe, where is God my maker (r)? I bleſs thee for the knowledge, with which thou haſt adorned it. I bleſs thee for that grace, with which, I truſt

(o) Pſal. xxxix. 3. (p) Pſal. iii. 3. [q] Pſal. xiii. 5. (r) Job xxxv. 10.

truſt I may (not without humble wonder) ſay, thou haſt ſanctified it; tho' alas, the celeſtial plant is fixed in too barren a ſoil, and does not flouriſh to the degree I could wiſh.

I bleſs thee alſo for that body which thou haſt given me, and which thou preſerveſt as yet in its ſtrength and vigour; not only capable of reliſhing the entertainments which thou haſt provided for its various ſenſes, but (which I eſteem far more valuable than any of them for its own ſake) capable of acting with ſome vivacity in thy ſervice. I bleſs thee for that eaſe and freedom, with which theſe limbs of mine move themſelves, and obey the dictates of my ſpirit, I hope as guided by thine. I bleſs thee, that the keepers of the houſe do not yet tremble, nor the ſtrong men bow themſelves; that they that look out of the windows are not yet darkened, nor the daughters of muſick brought low: I bleſs thee, O God of my life, that the ſilver cords are not yet looſed, nor the golden bowl broken (s):' For it is thine hand that braces all my nerves, and thine infinite ſkill that prepares thoſe ſpirits, which flow in ſo freely, and when exhauſted recruit ſo ſoon and ſo plentifully.

" I praiſe thee for that royal bounty, with which thou provideſt for the daily ſupport of mankind in general, and for mine in particular; for the various table which thou ſpreadeſt before me, and for the over flowing cup which thou putteſt into my hands (t). I bleſs thee, that theſe bounties of thy providence do not ſerve, as it were, to upbraid a diſabled appetite, and are not like meſſes of meat ſet before the dead. I bleſs thee too, that 'I eat not my morſel alone (u), But ſhare it with ſo many agreeable friends, who add the reliſh of a ſocial life to that of the animal at our ſeaſons of common repaſt.—I thank thee for ſo many dear relatives at home, for ſo many kind friends abroad, who are capable of ſerving me in various inſtances, and diſpoſed to make an obliging uſe of that capacity.

" Nor would I forget to acknowledge thy favour, in rendering me capable of ſerving others, and giving me

[s] Eccl. xii. 3, 4, 6. [t] Pſal. xxiii, 5. [u] Job xxxi. 17.

in any inſtances to know, how much 'more bleſſed it is to give than to receive (x). I thank thee for a heart which feels the ſorrows of the neceſſitous, and a mind which can make it my early care and refreſhment to contrive, according to my little ability, for their relief: For 'this alſo cometh forth from thee, O Lord (y),' the great author of every benevolent inclination, of every prudent ſcheme, of every ſucceſsful attempt to ſpread happineſs around us, or in any inſtance to leſſen diſtreſs.

"And ſurely, O Lord, if I thus acknowledge the pleaſures of ſympathy with the afflicted, much more muſt I bleſs thee for thoſe of ſympathy with the happy, with thoſe that are compleatly bleſſed. I adore thee for the ſtreams that water paradiſe, and maintain it in ever-flouriſhing, ever-growing delight. I praiſe thee for the reſt, the joy, the tranſport, thou art giving to many that were once dear to me on earth; whoſe ſorrows it was my labour to ſooth, and whoſe joys, eſpecially in thee, it was the delight of my heart to promote. I praiſe thee for the bleſſedneſs of every ſaint, and of every angel, that ſurrounds thy throne above; and I praiſe thee with accents of diſtinguiſhed pleaſure, for that reviving hope which thou haſt implanted in my boſom, that I ſhall 'ere long know by clear ſight, and by everlaſting experience, what that felicity of theirs is, which I now only diſcover at a diſtance, thro' the comparatively obſcure glaſs of faith. Even now, thro' thy grace do I feel myſelf born forward by thy ſupporting arm to thoſe regions of bleſſedneſs.—Even now I am waiting for thy Salvation (z), with that ardent deſire on the one hand, which its ſublime greatneſs cannot but inſpire into the believing ſoul, and that calm reſignation on the other, which the immutability of thy promiſe eſtabliſhes.

"And now, O my God, what ſhall I ſay unto thee! what, but that I love thee above all the powers of language to expreſs! that I love thee for what thou art to thy creatures, who are in their various forms, every moment deriving being, knowledge and happineſs, from thee,

(x) Acts xx. 35. (y) Iſa. xxviii. 29. (z) Gen. xlix. 18.

thee, in numbers and degrees, far beyond what my narrow imagination can conceive. But O I adore and love thee, yet, far more, for what thou art in thyſelf, for thoſe ſtores of perfection which creation has not diminiſhed, and which can never be exhauſted by all the effects of it which thou impartest to thy creatures; that infinite perfection, which makes thee thine own happineſs, thine own end; amiable, infinitely amiable and venerable, were all derived excellence and happineſs forgot.

"O thou firſt, thou greateſt, thou faireſt of all objects! thou only great, thou only fair, poſſeſs all my ſoul! and ſurely thou doſt poſſeſs it.—— While I thus feel thy ſacred ſpirit breathing on my heart, and exciting theſe fervours of love to thee, I cannot doubt it any more, than I can doubt the reality of this animal life, while I exert the actings of it, and feel its ſenſations. Surely if ever I knew the appetite of hunger, my ſoul hungers after righteouſneſs (a), and longs for a greater conformity to thy bleſſed nature and holy will. If ever my palate felt thirſt, my ſoul thirſteth for God, even for the living God (b), and panteth for the more abundant communication of his favour. If ever his body, when wearied with labours or journies, knew what it was to wiſh for the refreſhment of my bed and rejoiced to reſt there, my ſoul with ſweet acquieſcence reſts upon thy gracious boſom, O my heavenly father, and returns to its repoſe in the embraces of its God, who hath dealt ſo bountifully with it (c). And if ever I ſaw the face of a beloved friend with complacency and joy, I rejoice in beholding thy face, O Lord, and in calling thee my father in Chriſt. Such thou art, and ſuch thou wilt be, for time and for eternity. What have I more to do, but to commit myſelf to thee for both? Leaving it to thee to chuſe mine inheritance, and to order my affairs for me (d), while all my buſineſs is to ſerve thee, and all my delight to praiſe thee. My ſoul follows hard after God, becauſe his right hand upholds me (e). Let it ſtill bear me up, and I ſhall preſs on towards thee, till all my

(a) Mat. v 6. (b) Pſal. xlii. 2. (c) Pſal. cxvi. 7. (d) Pſal. xlvii. 4. (e) Pſal. lxiii. 8.

deſires be accompliſhed in the eternal enjoyment of thee! *Amen.*"

CHAP. XXVIII.

The Eſtabliſhed Chriſtian urged to exert himſelf for Purpoſes of Uſefulneſs.

A ſincere love to God will expreſs itſelf, not only in devotion, but in benevolence to men. §. 1, 2. *This is the command of God,* §. 3. *The true chriſtian feels his ſoul wrought to a holy conformity to it;* §. 4. *and therefore will deſire inſtructions on this head.* §. 5. *Accordingly directions are given for the improvement of various talents: Particularly,* (1.) *Genius and learning.* §. 6. (2.) *Power.* §. 7. (3.) *Domeſtick authority.* §. 8. (4.) *Eſteem,* §. 9. (5.) *Riches,* §. 10. *Several good ways of employing them hinted at,* §. 11. *Prudence in expence urged, for the ſupport of charity,* §. 12, 13. *Divine direction in this reſpect to be ſought.* §. 14. *The chriſtian breathing after more extenſive uſefulneſs.*

§. 1. SUCH as I have deſcribed in the former chapter, I truſt, are and will be the frequent exerciſes of your ſouls before God. Thus will your love and gratitude breathe itſelf forth in the divine preſence, and will, thro' Jeſus the great mediator, come up before it as incenſe, and yield an acceptable ſavour. But then, you muſt remember, this will not be the only effect of that love to God, which I have ſuppoſed ſo warm in your heart. If it be ſincere, it will not ſpend itſelf in words alone; but will diſcover itſelf in actions, and will produce, as its genuine fruit, an unfeigned love to your fellow-creatures, and an unwearied deſire and labour to do them good continually.

§. 2.

§. 2. "Has the great father of mercies," will you ſay, "looked upon me with ſo gracious an eye; has he not only forgiven me ten thouſand offences, but inriched me with ſuch a variety of benefits; Oh what ſhall I render to him for them all! inſtruct me, Oh ye oracles of eternal truth! inſtruct me, ye elder brethren in the family of my heavenly father! inſtruct me above all, Oh thou ſpirit of wiſdom and of love, what I may be able to do, to expreſs my love to the great eternal fountain of love, and to approve my fidelity to him, who has already done ſo much to engage it, and who will take ſo much pleaſure in owning and rewarding it!"

§. 3. This, O chriſtian, is the command which we have heard from the beginning, and it will ever continue in unimpaired force, that he who loveth God, ſhould love his brother alſo (a); and ſhould expreſs that love, not in word and profeſſion alone, but in deed and in truth (b). You are to love your neighbour as yourſelf; to love the whole creation of God; and, ſo far as your influence can extend, muſt endeavour to make it happy.

§. 4. "Yes," will you ſay, "and I do love it. I feel the golden chain of the divine love incircling us all, and binding us cloſe to each other, joining us in one body, and diffuſing (as it were) one ſoul thro' all. May happineſs, true and ſublime, perpetual and evergrowing happineſs, reign thro' the whole world of God's rational and obedient creatures in heaven and on earth! and may every revolted creature, that is capable of being recovered and reſtored, be made obedient! yea, may the neceſſary puniſhment of thoſe, who are irrecoverable, be overruled by infinite wiſdom and love to the good of the whole!"

§. 5. Theſe are right ſentiments; and if they are indeed the ſentiments of your heart, O reader, and not an empty form of vain words, they will be attended with a ſerious concern to act in ſubordination to this great ſcheme of divine providence, according to your abilities in their utmoſt extent. And to this purpoſe, they will

(a) John iv. 21. (b) John iii. 28.

put you on ſurveying the peculiar circumſtances of your life and being; that you may diſcover what opportunities of uſefulneſs they now afford, and how thoſe opportunities and capacities may be improved. Enter therefore into ſuch ſurvey; not that you may pride yourſelf in the diſtinctions of divine providence or grace towards you, or having received, may glory as if you had not received (c); but that you may deal faithfully with the great proprietor, whoſe ſteward you are, and by whom you are intruſted with every talent, which, with reſpect to any claim from your fellow-creatures, you may call your own. And here, having gifts differing according to the grace which is now given unto us (d), let us hold the balance with an impartial hand, that ſo we may determine what it is that God requires of us; which is nothing leſs, than doing the moſt we can invent, contrive, and effect, for the general good. But, Oh how ſeldom is this eſtimate faithfully made! and how much does the world around us, and how much do our own ſouls ſuffer, for want of that fidelity!

§. 6. Hath God given you genius and learning? It was not, that you might amuſe, or deck yourſelf with it, and kindle a blaze which ſhould only ſerve to attract and dazzle the eyes of men. It was intended, to be the means of leading both yourſelf and them to the father of lights. And it will be your duty, according to the peculiar turn of that genius and capacity, either to endeavour to improve and adorn human life, or, by a more direct application of it to divine ſubjects, to plead the cauſe of religion, to defend its truths, to enforce and recommend its practice, to deter men from courſes which would be diſhonourable to God and fatal to themſelves, and to try the utmoſt efforts of all the ſolemnity and tenderneſs with which you can clothe your addreſſes, to lead them into the paths of virtue and happineſs.

§. 7. Has God inveſted you with power, whether it be in a larger or ſmaller ſociety? Remember, that this power was given you, that God might be honoured, and thoſe

(c) 1 Cor. iv. 7. (d) Rom. xii. 6.

thoſe placed under your government, whether domeſtic or public might be made happy. Be concerned therefore, whether you be intruſted with the rod, or the ſword, it may not be born in vain (e). Are you a magiſtrate? Have you any ſhare in the great and tremendous charge of enacting laws? Reverence the authority of the ſupream legiſlator, the great guardian of ſociety: Promote none, conſent to none, which you do not in your own conſcience eſteem, in preſent circumſtances, an intimation of his will; and in the eſtabliſhment of which you do not firmly believe you ſhall be his miniſter for good (f). Have you the charge of executing laws; put life into them by a vigorous and ſtrenuous execution, according to the nature of the particular office you bear. Retain not an empty name of authority. Permit not yourſelf, as it were, to fall aſleep on the tribunal. Be active, be wakeful, be obſervant of what paſſeth around you. Protect the upright, and the innocent. Break in pieces the power of the oppreſſor. Unveil every diſhoneſt art. Diſgrace, as well as defeat the wretch that makes his diſtinguiſhed abilities the diſguiſe or protection of the wickedneſs, which he ought rather to endeavour to expoſe, and to drive out of the world with abhorrence.

§. 8. Are you placed only at the head of a private family? Rule it for God. Adminiſter the concerns of that little kingdom with the ſame views, and on the ſame principles, which I have been inculcating on the powerful and the great; if by an unexpected accident any of them ſhould ſuffer their eyes to glance upon the paſſage above. Your children and ſervants are your natural ſubjects. Let good order be eſtabliſhed among them, and keep them under a regular diſcipline. Let them be inſtructed in the principles of religion, that they may know how reaſonable ſuch a diſcipline is; and let them be accuſtomed to act accordingly. You cannot indeed change their hearts, but you may very much influence their conduct; and by that means may preſerve them from many ſnares, may do a great deal to make them

(e) Rom. xiii. 4. (f) Ibid.

them good members of ſociety, and may ſet them as it were in the way of God's ſteps (g), if peradventure paſſing by he may bleſs them with the riches of his grace. And fail not to do your utmoſt to convince them of their need of thoſe bleſſings; labour to engage them to an high eſteem of them, and to an earneſt deſire after them, as incomparably more valuable than any thing elſe.

§. 9. Again, has God been pleaſed to raiſe you to eſteem among your fellow-creatures, which is not always in proportion to a man's rank or poſſeſſions in human life? Are your counſels heard with attention? Is your company ſought? Does God give you good acceptance in the eyes of men, ſo that they do not only put the faireſt conſtruction on your words, but overlook faults of which you are conſcious to yourſelf, and conſider your actions and performances in the moſt indulgent and favourable light? You ought to regard this, not only as a favour of providence, and as an encouragement to you chearfully to purſue your duty, in the ſeveral branches of it, for the time to come; but alſo, as giving you much greater opportunities of uſefulneſs, than in your preſent ſtation you could otherwiſe have had. If your character has any weight in the world, throw it into the right ſcale. Endeavour to keep virtue and goodneſs in countenance. Affectionately give up your hand to modeſt worth, where it ſeems to be depreſſed or overlooked; tho' ſhining, when viewed in its proper light, with a luſtre, which you may think much ſuperior to your own. Be an advocate for truth; be a counſellor of peace; be an example of candour; and do all you can to reconcile the hearts of men, and eſpecially of good men, to each other, however they may differ in their opinions about matters which it is poſſible for good men to diſpute. And let the caution and humility of your behaviour in circumſtances of ſuch ſuperior eminence, and amidſt ſo many tokens of general eſteem, ſilently reprove the raſhneſs and haugtineſs of thoſe

(g) Pſal. lxxxv. 13.

thoſe, who perhaps are remarkable for little elſe; or who, if their abilities were indeed conſiderable, muſt be deſpiſed, and whoſe talents muſt be in a great meaſure loſt to the public, till that raſhneſs and haughtineſs of ſpirit be ſubdued. Nor ſuffer yourſelf to be interrupted in this generous and worthy courſe, by the little attacks of envy and calumny, which you may meet with in it. Be ſtill attentive to the general good, and ſteadily reſolute in your efforts to promote it; and leave it to providence, to guard or to reſcue your character from the baſe aſſaults of malice and falſehood; which will often, without your labour, confute themſelves, and heap upon the authors greater ſhame, or (if they are inacceſſible to that,) greater infamy, than your humanity will allow you to wiſh them.

§. 10. Once more, has God bleſt you with riches? Has he placed you in ſuch circumſtances, that you have more than you abſolutely need for the ſubſiſtence of your ſelf and your family? remember your approaching account. Remember what an incumbrance theſe things often prove to men in the way of their ſalvation, and how often, according to our Lord's expreſs declaration, they render it as difficult to enter into the kingdom of God, as it is for a camel to go thro' the eye of a needle (h). Let it therefore be your immediate, your earneſt, and your daily prayer, that riches may not be a ſnare and a ſhame to you, as they are to by far the greater part of their poſſeſſors. Appropriate, I beſeech you, ſome certain part and proportion of your eſtate and revenues to charitable uſes; with a proviſional increaſe, as God ſhall proſper you, in any extraordinary inſtance. By this means you will always have a fund of charity at hand: And you will probably be more ready to communicate, when you look upon what is ſo depoſited, as not in any ſenſe your own; but as already actually given away to thoſe uſes; tho' not yet affixed to particular objects.—It is not for me to ſay, what that proportion ought to be. To thoſe who have large revenues, and no children, perhaps a third or one half may be too little: To thoſe

(h) Mat. xix. 24.

thoſe whoſe incomes are ſmall, and their charge conſiderable, tho' they have ſomething more than is abſolutely neceſſary, it is poſſible a tenth may be too much. But pray, that God would guide your mind; make a trial for one year, on ſuch terms as in your conſcience you think will be moſt pleaſing to him; and let your obſervation on that, teach you to fix your proportion for the next; always remembring, that he requires juſtice in the firſt place, and alms deeds only ſo far as may conſiſt with that. Yet at the ſame time take heed of that treacherous, deluſive, and in many inſtances deſtructive imagination, 'that juſtice to your own family requires that you ſhould leave your children very rich;' which has perhaps coſt ſome parſimonious parents the lives of thoſe darlings for whom they laid up the portion of the poor; and what fatal conſequences of divine diſpleaſure may attend it to thoſe that yet ſurvive, God only knows; and I heartily pray, that you or yours may never learn by experience.

§. 11. And that your heart may be yet more opened, and that your charity may be directed to the beſt purpoſes, let me briefly mention a variety of good uſes, which may call for the conſideration of thoſe, whom God has in this reſpect diſtinguiſhed by an ability to do good. To aſſiſt the hints I am to offer, look round on the neighbourhood in which you live. Think how many honeſt and induſtrious, perhaps too I might add religious people, are making very hard ſhifts to ſtruggle thro' life. Think what a comfort that would be to them, which you might, without any inconvenience, ſpare from that abundance which God hath given you. Hearken alſo to any extraordinary calls of charity which may happen, eſpecially thoſe of a public nature; and help them forward with your example, and your intereſt, which perhaps may be of much greater importance than the ſum which you contribute, conſidered in itſelf.—— Have a tongue to plead for the neceſſitous, as well as a hand to relieve them; and endeavour to diſcountenance thoſe poor ſhameful excuſes, which covetouſneſs often dictates to thoſe, whoſe art may indeed ſet ſome

varniſh

varniſh on what they ſuggeſt, but ſo ſlight a one that the coarſe ground will appear thro' it.——See how many poor children are wandring naked and ignorant about the ſtreets, and in the way to all kinds of vice and miſery; and conſider what can be done, towards cloathing ſome of them at leaſt, and inſtructing them in the principles of religion. Would every thriving family in a town, which is able to afford help on ſuch occaſions, caſt a pitying eye on one poor family in its neighbourhood, and take it under their patronage, to aſſiſt in feeding, and cloathing, and teaching the children, in ſupporting it in affliction, in defending it from wrongs, and in adviſing thoſe that have the management of it, as circumſtances may require, how great a difference would ſoon be produced in the appearance of things amongſt us?——Obſerve who are ſick, that if there be no public infirmary at hand to which you can introduce them, (where your contributions will yield the largeſt increaſe,) you may do ſomething towards relieving them at home, and ſupplying them with advice and medicines, as well as with proper diet and attendance. ——Conſider alſo the ſpiritual neceſſities of men; in providing for which, I would particularly recommend to you the very important and noble charity of aſſiſting young perſons of genius and piety, with what is neceſſary to ſupport the expence of their education for the miniſtry, in a proper courſe of grammatical or academical ſtudies. And grudge not ſome proportion of what God hath given you, to thoſe, who reſigning all temporal views to miniſter to you the goſpel of Chriſt, have ſurely an equitable claim to be ſupported by you, in a capacity of rendering you thoſe ſervices, however laborious, to which, for your ſakes, and that of our common Lord, they have devoted their lives. And while you are ſo abundantly ſatisfied with the goodneſs of God's houſe, even of his holy temple (i), have compaſſion on thoſe who dwell in a deſart land; and rejoice to do ſomething towards ſending among the diſtant nations of the heathen world, that glorious goſpel which hath

(i) Pſal. lxv. 4.

hath ſo long continued unknown to multitudes, tho' the knowledge of it, with becoming regard, be life everlaſting.—Theſe are a few important charities, which I would point out to thoſe, whom providence has enriched with its peculiar bounties; And it renders Gold more precious, than it could appear in any other light, that it is capable of being employed for ſuch purpoſes. But if you ſhould not have gold to ſpare for them, contribute your ſilver: Or as a farthing, or a mite, is not overlooked by God, when it is given from a truly generous and charitable heart (k), let that be chearfully dropped into the treaſury, where richer offerings cannot be afforded.

§. 12. And, that amidſt ſo many preſſing demands for charity, you may be better furniſhed to anſwer them, ſeriouſly reflect on your manner of living. I ſay not, that God requires, you ſhould become one of the many poor, relieved out of your income. The ſupport of ſociety as at preſent eſtabliſhed, will not only permit, but require, that ſome perſons ſhould allow themſelves in the elegancies and delights of life; by furniſhing which, multitudes of poor families are much more creditably and comfortably ſubſiſted, with greater advantage to themſelves and ſafety to the public, than they could be, if the price of their labours, or of the commodities in which they deal, were to be given them as an alms. Nor can I imagine it grateful to God, that his gifts ſhould be refuſed, as if they were meant for ſnares and curſes, rather than benefits. This were to fruſtrate the benevolent purpoſes of the gracious father of mankind, and if carried to its rigour would be a ſort of conſpiracy againſt the whole ſyſtem of nature. Let the bounties of providence be uſed; but let us carefully ſee to it, that it be in a moderate and prudent manner, leſt by your own folly, that which ſhould have been for your welfare, become a trap (l). Let conſcience ſay, my dear reader, with regard to yourſelf, what proportion of the good things you poſſeſs your heavenly father intends for yourſelf, and what for your brethren and

[k] Mark xii. 42, 43. [l] Pſal. lxix. 22.

and live not, as if you had no brethren, as if pleaſing yourſelf in all the magnificence and luxury you can deviſe, were the end for which you were ſent into the world. I fear this is the exceſs of the preſent age, and not an exceſs of rigour and mortification. Examine therefore your expences, and compare them with your income. That may be ſhamefully extravagant in you, which may not only be pardonable, but commendable in another of ſuperior eſtate. Nor can you be ſure, that you do not exceed, merely becauſe you do not plunge yourſelf in debt, nor render yourſelf incapable of laying up any thing for your family. If you be diſabled from doing any thing to the poor, or any thing proportionable to your rank in life, by that genteel and elegant way of living which you affect, God muſt diſapprove of ſuch a conduct; and you ought, as you will anſwer it to him, to retrench it. And tho' the divine indulgence will undoubtedly be exerciſed to thoſe in whom there is a ſincere principle of faith in Chriſt, and undiſſembled love to God and man, tho' it act not to that height of beneficence and uſefulneſs which might have been attained; yet be aſſured of this, that he who rendereth to every one according to his works, will have a ſtrict regard to the degrees of goodneſs in the diſtribution of final rewards: So that every neglected opportunity draws after it an irreparable loſs, which will go into eternity along with you. And let me add too, that every inſtance of negligence indulged renders the mind more and more indolent and weak, and conſequently more indiſpoſed to recover the ground which has been loſt, or even to maintain that which has hitherto been kept.

§. 13. Complain not, that this is impoſing hard things upon you. I am only directing your pleaſures into a nobler channel; and indeed that frugality, which is the ſource of ſuch a generoſity, far from being at all injurious to your reputation, will rather, amongſt wiſe and good men, greatly promote it. But you have far nobler motives before you, than thoſe which ariſe from their regards. I ſpeak to you, as to a child of God, and a member of Chriſt; as joined therefore by the moſt in-

timate union to all the pooreſt of thoſe that believe in him. I ſpeak to you, as to an heir of eternal glory, who ought therefore to have ſentiments great and ſublime in ſome proportion to that expected inheritance:

§. 14. Caſt about therefore in your thoughts, what good is to be done, and what good you can do, either in your own perſon, or by your intereſt with others; and go about it with reſolution, as in the name and preſence of the Lord. And as the Lord giveth wiſdom, and out of his mouth cometh knowledge and underſtanding (m), go to the footſtool of his throne, and there ſeek that guidance and that grace, which may ſuit your preſent circumſtances, and may be effectual to produce the fruits of holineſs and uſefulneſs, to his more abundant glory, and to the honour of your chriſtian profeſſion.

The eſtabliſhed Chriſtian *breathing after more extenſive Uſefulneſs.*

"O Bountiful Father, and ſovereign author of all good, whether natural or ſpiritual! I bleſs thee for the various talents, with which thou haſt enriched ſo undeſerving a creature, as I muſt acknowledge myſelf to be. My ſoul is in the deepeſt confuſion before thee, when I conſider to how little purpoſe I have hitherto improved them. Alas! what have I done, in proportion to what thou mighteſt reaſonably have expected, with the gifts of nature which thou haſt beſtowed upon me, with my capacities of life, with my time, with my poſſeſſions, with my influence over others! Alas! thro' my own negligence and folly, I look back on a barren wilderneſs, where I might have ſeen a fruitful field, and a ſpringing harveſt! juſtly do I indeed deſerve to be ſtripped of all, to be brought to an immediate account for all, to be condemned as in many reſpects unfaithful to thee, and to the world, and to my own ſoul; and, in conſequence of that condemnation, to be caſt into the priſon of eternal darkneſs! but thou, Lord, haſt freely forgiven the dreadful debt of ten thouſand talents. Adored be thy name for it! accept,

[m] Prov. ii 6.

accept, O Lord, accept that renewed ſurrender, which I would now make of myſelf, and of all I have unto thy ſervice! I acknowledge that it is of thine own that I give thee (n), make me, I beſeech thee, a faithful ſteward for my great Lord; and may I think of no ſeparate intereſt of my own, in oppoſition to thine!

"I adore thee, O thou God of all grace, if while I am thus ſpeaking to thee, I feel the love of thy creatures ariſing in my ſoul; if I feel my heart opening to embrace my brethren of mankind! Oh make me thy faithful almoner, in diſtributing to them all that thou haſt lodged in mine hand for their relief! and in determining what is my own ſhare, may I hold the balance with an equal hand, and judge impartially between myſelf and them! the proportion thou alloweſt may I thankfully take for myſelf, and thoſe who are immediately mine! the reſt, may I diſtribute with wiſdom, and fidelity, and chearfulneſs! guide mine hand, O ever merciful Father, while thou doſt me the honour to make me thine inſtrument in dealing out a few of thy bounties; that I may beſtow them where they are moſt needed, and where they will anſwer the beſt end! and if it be thy gracious will, do thou multiply the ſeed ſown (o); proſper me in my worldly affairs, that I may have more to impart to them that need it; and thus lead me on to the region of everlaſting plenty, and everlaſting benevolence! there may I meet with many, to whom I have been an affectionate benefactor on earth; and, if it be thy bleſſed will, with many, whom I have alſo been the means of conducting into the path to that bliſsful abode! there may they entertain me in their habitations of glory! and in time and eternity, do thou, Lord, accept the praiſe of all, thro' Jeſus Chriſt; at whoſe feet I would bow; and at whoſe feet after the moſt uſeful courſe, I would at laſt die, with as much humility, as if I were then exerting the firſt act of faith upon him, and had never had any opportunity, by one

[n] 1 Chron. xxix. 14. [o] Cor. ix. 10.

tribute of obedience and gratitude in the ſervices of life, to approve its ſincerity!"

CHAP. XXIX.

The Chriſtian rejoicing in the Views of Death and Judgment.

Death and judgment are near: But the chriſtian has reaſon to welcome both: §. 1. *Yet nature recoils from the ſolemnity of them.* §. 2. *An attempt to reconcile the mind,* [I.] *To the proſpect of death.* §. 3. *from the conſideration,* (1.) *Of the many evils that ſurround us in this mortal life,* §. 4. (2.) *Of the remainder of ſin which we feel within us.* §. 5. *And,* (3.) *Of the happineſs which is immediately to ſucceed death.* §. 6, 7. *All which might make the chriſtian willing to die, in the moſt agreeable circumſtances of human life.* §. 8. [II.] *The chriſtian has reaſon to rejoice in the proſpect of judgment:* §. 9. *Since however awful it be, Chriſt will then come, to vindicate his honour, to diſplay his glory, and to triumph over his enemies;* §. 10. *As alſo to compleat the happineſs of every believer.* §. 11. *and of the whole church.* §. 12, 13. *The meditation of a chriſtian, whoſe heart is warm with theſe proſpects.*

§. 1. WHEN the viſions of the Lord were cloſing upon John, the beloved diſciple, in the iſland of Patmos, it is obſervable, that he who gave him that revelation, even Jeſus the faithful and true witneſs, concludes with thoſe lively and important words: He who teſtifieth theſe things ſaith, ſurely I come quickly: And John anſwers with the greateſt readineſs and pleaſure, *amen*, even ſo come, Lord Jeſus (a)! come, as thou haſt ſaid, ſurely, and quickly!

and

[a] Rev. xii. 20.

and rememberr, O chriſtian, whoever you are that are now reading theſe words, your divine Lord ſpeaks in the ſame language to you: Behold I come quickly.—Yes, very quickly will he come by death, to turn the key, to open the door of the grave for thine admittance thither, and to lead thee thro' it into the now unknown regions of the inviſible world. Nor is it long before the judge, who ſtandeth at the door (b), will appear alſo to the univerſal judgment: And tho' perhaps not only ſcores, but hundreds of years may lie between that period and the preſent moment, yet it is but a very ſmall point of time to him, who views at once all the unmeaſurable ages of a paſt and future eternity. A thouſand years are with him but as one day, and one day as a thouſand years (c). In both theſe ſenſes then does he come quickly: And I truſt, you can anſwer, with a glad *Amen*, that the warning is not terrible, nor unpleaſant to your ears, but rather, that his coming, his certain, his ſpeedy coming, is the object of your delightful hope, and of your longing expectation.

§. 2. I am ſure it is reaſonable, it ſhould be ſo: And yet perhaps nature, fond of life and unwilling to part with a long known abode, to enter on a ſtate to which it is entirely a ſtranger, may recoil from the thoughts of dying; or ſtruck with the awful pomp of an expiring and diſſolving world, may look on the judgment day with ſome mixture of terror. And therefore my dear brother in the Lord, (for as ſuch I can now eſteem you,) I would reaſon with you a little on this head, and would intreat you to look more attentively on this ſolemn object, which will, I truſt, grow leſs diſagreeable to you, as it is more familiarly viewed. Nay, I hope, that inſtead of ſtarting back from it, you will rather ſpring forward towards it with joy and delight.

§. 3. Think, O chriſtian, when Chriſt comes to call you away by death, he comes,——to ſet you at liberty from your preſent ſorrows,——to deliver you from your ſtruggles with remaining corruption,——and to receive you to dwell with himſelf in compleat holi-

[b] Jam. v. 9. [c] 2 Pet. iii. 8.

neſs and joy. You ſhall be abſent from the body, and be preſent with the Lord (d).

§. 4. He will indeed call you away from this world. But Oh, what is this world, that you ſhould be fond of it, and cling to it with ſo much eagerneſs? How long are all theſe enjoyments that are peculiar to it; and how many its vexations, its ſnares and its ſorrows? Review your pilgrimage thus far; and tho' you muſt acknowledge, that goodneſs and mercy have attended you all the days of your life (e), yet, has not that very mercy itſelf planted ſome thorns in your paths, and and given you ſome wiſe and neceſſary, yet painful intimations, that this is not your reſt (f)? Review the monuments of your withered joys, of your blaſted hopes; if there be yet any monuments of them remaining, more than a mournful remembrance they have left behind in your afflicted heart. Look upon the graves, that have ſwallowed up many of your deareſt and moſt amiable friends, perhaps in the very bloom of life, and in the greateſt intimacy of your converſe with them; and reflect, that if you hold it out a few years more, death will renew its conqueſts at your expence, and devour the moſt precious of thoſe that yet ſurvive.—View the living, as well as the dead; behold the ſtate of human nature, under the many grievous marks of its apoſtacy from God; and ſay, whether a wiſe and good man would wiſh to continue always here. Methinks were I myſelf ſecure from being reached by any of the arrows that fly around me, I could not but mourn, to ſee the wounds that are given by them, and to hear the groans of thoſe that are continually falling under them. The diſeaſes and calamities of mankind are ſo many, and which is moſt grievous of all, the diſtempers of the mind are ſo various, and ſo threatning, that the world appears almoſt like an hoſpital: And a man, whoſe heart is tender, is ready to feel his ſpirits broken, as he walks thro' it, and ſurveys the ſad ſcene; eſpecially when he ſees, how little he can do for the recovery of thoſe whom he pities. Are you a chriſtian, and does

[d] 2 Cor. v. 8. [e] Pet. xxiii. 6. [f] Mic. ii. 10.

does it not pierce your heart, to ſee how human nature is ſunk, in vice, and in ſhame? To ſee with what amazing inſolence, ſome are making themſelves openly vile, and how the name of Chriſt is diſhonoured by many too that call themſelves his people? to ſee the unlawful deeds and filthy practices of them that are ungodly, and to behold, at the ſame time, the infirmities at leaſt, and irregularities of thoſe, concerning whom we have better hopes? And do you not wiſh to eſcape from ſuch a world, where a righteous and compaſſionate ſoul muſt be vexed from day to day by ſo many ſpectacles of ſin and miſery (g)?

§. 5. Yea, to come nearer home, do you not feel ſomething within you, which you long to quit and would imbitter paradiſe itſelf? Something, which, were it to continue, would grieve and diſtreſs you even in the ſociety of the bleſſed? Do you not feel a remainder of indwelling ſin; the ſad conſequence of the original revolt of our nature from God? Are you not ſtruggling every day with ſome reſidue of corruption, or at leaſt mourning on account of the weakneſs of your graces? Do you not often find your ſpirits dull and languid, when you would deſire to raiſe them to the greateſt fervour in the ſervice of God? Do you not find your hearts too often inſenſible of the richeſt inſtances of his love, and your hands feeble in his ſervice, even when to will is preſent with you (h)? Does not your life, in its beſt days and hours, appear a low unprofitable thing, when compared with what you are ſenſible it ought to be, and with what you wiſh that it were? Are you not frequently, as it were, 'ſtretching the pinions of the mind, and ſaying, Oh that I had wings like a dove that I might fly away and be at reſt (i)?

§. 6. Should you not then rejoice in the thought, that Jeſus comes to deliver you from theſe complaints?—That he comes to anſwer your wiſhes, and to fulfill the largeſt deſires of your hearts; thoſe deſires, that he himſelf has inſpired? That he comes to open upon you

(g) 2 Pet. ii. 8. (h) Rom. vii. 18. [i] Pſal. lv. 6.

you a world of purity and joy, of active, exalted, and unwearied ſervices?

§. 7. O chriſtian, how often have you caſt a longing eye towards thoſe happy ſhores, and wiſhed to paſs the ſea, the boiſterous, unpleaſant, dangerous ſea, that ſeparates you from them? When your Lord has condeſcended to make you a ſhort viſit in his ordinances on earth, how have you bleſt the time, and the place, and pronounced it, amidſt any other diſadvantage of ſituation, to be the very gate, of heaven (k)? And is it ſo delightful to behold this gate, and will it not be much more to enter into it? Is it ſo delightful to receive the viſits of Jeſus for an hour, and will it not be infinitely more ſo to dwell with him for ever? Lord, may you well ſay, 'when I dwell with thee, I ſhall dwell in holineſs, for thou thyſelf art holineſs; I ſhall dwell in love, for thou thyſelf art love; I ſhall dwell in joy, for thou art the fountain of joy as 'thou art in the father, and the father in thee (l).' Bid welcome to his approach therefore, to take you at your word, and to fulfil to you that ſaying of his, on which your ſoul has ſo often reſted with heavenly peace and pleaſure; 'father I will that they whom thou haſt given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou haſt given me (m).'

§. 8. Surely you may ſay in this view, "the ſooner Chriſt comes, the better." What tho' the reſidue of your days be cut off in the midſt? What tho' you leave many expected pleaſures in life untaſted, and many ſchemes unaccompliſhed? Is it not enough, that what is taken from a mortal life ſhall be added to a glorious eternity; and that you ſhall ſpend thoſe days and years in the preſence and ſervice of Chriſt in heaven, which you might otherwiſe have ſpent with him and for him in the imperfect enjoyments and labours of earth?

§. 9. But your proſpects reach, not only beyond death, but beyond the ſeparate ſtate. For with regard to his final appearance to judgment our Lord ſays, ſurely I come quickly, in the ſenſe illuſtrated before: And ſo it will appear to us, if we compare this interval of time with

(k) Gen. xxviii. 17. (l) John xvii. 21. (m) John xvii. 24.

with the bliſsful eternity which is to ſucceed it: And probably, if we compare it with thoſe ages which have already paſſed, ſince the ſun began to meaſure out to earth its days and its years. And will you not here alſo ſing your part in the joyful anthem, *Amen*; even ſo come, Lord Jeſus!

§. 10. It is true, chriſtan, it is an awful day: A day; in which nature ſhall be thrown into a confuſion as yet unknown.——No earthquake, no eruption of burning mountains, no deſolation of cities by devouring flames, or of countries by overflowing rivers or ſeas, can give any juſt emblem of that dreadful day; when the heavens being on fire ſhall be diſſolved, as well as the earth and all that is therein, ſhall be burnt up (n); when all nature ſhall fly away in amazement before the face of the univerſal judge (o), and there ſhall be a great cry, far beyond what was known in the land of Egypt, when there was not a houſe in which there was not one dead (p). Your fleſh may be ready to tremble at the view; yet your ſpirit muſt ſurely rejoice in God your ſaviour (q). You may juſtly ſay, "let this illuſtrious day come, even with all its horrors!" Yea, like the chriſtians deſcribed by the Apoſtle (r), you may be looking for, and haſting to that day of terrible brightneſs and univerſal doom. For your Lord will then come to vindicate the juſtice of thoſe proceedings, which have been in many inſtances ſo much obſcured, and becauſe they have been obſcured, have been alſo blaſphemed. He will come, to diſplay his magnificence, deſcending from heaven with a ſhout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God (s), taking his ſeat upon a throne infinitely exceeding that of earthly, or even of celeſtial princes, clothed with his father's glory and his own (t), ſurrounded with a numberleſs hoſt of ſhining attendants when coming to be glorified in his ſaints, and admired in all them that believe (u). His enemies ſhall alſo be produced to grace his triumph: The ſerpent ſhall be ſeen there rolling in the duſt,

[n] 2 Pet. iii. 10, 11. [o] Rev. xx. 11. [p] Exo. xii. 30. [q] Luke i. 47. [r] 2 Pet iii. 12. [s] 1 Theſ. iv. 16. [t] Luke ix. 26. [u] 2 Theſ. i. 10.

duſt, and trodden under foot by him and by all his ſervants: Thoſe, who once condemned him, ſhall tremble at his preſence; and thoſe who bowed the knee before him in profane mockery, ſhall in wild deſpair call to the mountains to fall upon them, and to the rocks to hide them from the face of that lamb of God (x), whom they once led away to the moſt inhuman ſlaughter.

§. 11. O chriſtan, does not your loyal heart bound at the thought? And are you not ready, even while you read theſe lines, to begin the victorious ſhout in which you are then to join? He juſtly expects, that your thoughts ſhould be greatly elevated and impreſſed with the views of his triumph: But at the ſame time he permits you to remember your own perſonal ſhare in the joy and glory of that bleſſed day: And even now he has the view before him of what his power and love ſhall then accompliſh for your ſalvation. And what ſhall it not accompliſh? He ſhall come, to break the bars, of the grave, and to re-animate your ſleeping clay. Your bodies muſt indeed be laid in the duſt, and be lodged there as a teſtimony of God's diſpleaſure againſt ſin? Againſt the firſt ſin that was ever committed, from the ſad conſequences of which the deareſt of his children cannot be exempted. But you ſhall then have an ear to hear the voice of the ſon of God, and an eye to behold the luſtre of his appearance: And ſhall ſhine forth like the ſun (y) ariſing in the clear heaven, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber (z). Your ſoul ſhall be new dreſſed, to grace his high ſolemnity; and be clothed not with the rags of mortality, but with the robes of glory; for he ſhall change this vile body, to faſhion it like his own glorious body (a). And when you are thus royally arrayed, he ſhall confer public honours on you, and on all his people before the aſſembled world. You may now perhaps be loaded with infamy, called by reproachful names, and charged with crimes, or with views which your very ſoul abhors; but he will then bring forth your righteouſneſs as the light (b), and your ſalvation as a lamp

(x) Rev. vi. 16. (y) Mat. xiii. 43. (z) Pſal. xix. 5. [a] Phil. iii. 21. [b] Pſal. xxxviii. 6. [c] Iſa. xii. 1.

lamp that burneth (c). Tho' you have been diſhonour-ed by men, you ſhall be acknowledged by God; and tho' treated as the filth of the world, and the off-ſcour-ing of all things (d), he will ſhew that he regards you, as his treaſure, in the day that he makes up his jewels (e). When he ſhall put away all the wicked of the earth like droſs (f), you ſhall be pronounced righteous in that full aſſembly; and though indeed you have broken the di-vine law, and might in ſtrict juſtice have been condem-ned, yet being clothed with the righteouſneſs of the great redeemer, even that righteouſneſs which is of God by faith (g). Juſtice itſelf ſhall acquit you, and join with mercy in beſtowing upon you a crown of life (h). Chriſt will confeſs you before men and angels (i), will pro-nounce you good and faithful ſervants, and call you to enter into the joy of your Lord (k): He will ſpeak of you with endearment as his brethren, and will acknow-ledge the kindneſſes which have been ſhown to you, as if he had received them in his own perſon (l). Yea, then ſhall you, O chriſtian, who may perhaps have ſate in ſome of the loweſt places in our aſſemblies, tho' (it may be) none of the rich and great of the earth would condeſcend to look upon or ſpeak to you, be called to be aſſeſſors with Chriſt on his judgment-ſeat, and to join with him in the ſentence he ſhall paſs on wicked men and rebelli-ous angels.

§. 12. Nor is it merely one day of glory and of tri-umph, but when the judge ariſes and aſcends to his fa-ther's court, all the bleſſed ſhall aſcend with him, and you among the reſt: You ſhall aſcend together with your ſaviour, to his father and your father, to his God and your God (m). You ſhall go, to make your appearance in the new Jeruſalem, in thoſe new ſhining forms that you have received, which will no doubt be attended with a correſpondent improvement of mind; and take up your perpetual abode in that fulneſs of joy, with which you ſhall be filled and ſatisfied in the preſence of God

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(c) 1 Cor. iv. 13. (e) Mal. iii. 17. (f) Pſal. cxix. 119. (g) Phil. iii 9. (h) 2 Tim. iv. 8. (i) Luke xii. 8. (k) Mat. xxv. 21. (l) Mat. xxv. 40. (m) John xx. 17. (n) Pſal. xvi 11.

(n), upon the conſummation of that happineſs, which the ſaints in the intermediate ſtate have been wiſhing and waiting for. You ſhall go, from the ruins of a diſſolving world, to the new heavens and new earth, wherein righteouſneſs for ever dwells (o). There all the number of God's Elect ſhall be accompliſhed, and the happineſs of each ſhall be compleated. The whole ſociety ſhall be preſented before God, as the bride, the Lamb's wife (p), whom the eye of its celeſtial bridegroom ſhall ſurvey with unutterable delight, and confeſs to be without ſpot or wrinkle, or any ſuch thing (q): Its character and ſtate being juſt what he originally deſigned it to be, when he firſt engaged to give himſelf for it, to redeem it to God by his blood (r). So ſhall you ever be with each other, and with the Lord (s); and immortal ages ſhall roll away, and find you ſtill unchanged; your happineſs always the ſame, and your reliſh for it the ſame; or rather overgrowing, as your ſouls are approaching nearer and nearer to him, who is the ſource of happineſs, and the centre of infinite perfection.

§. 13. And now, look round about upon earth, and ſingle out, if you can, the enjoyments or the hopes, for the ſake of which you would ſay, Lord, delay thy coming; or for the ſake of which you any more ſhould heſitate to expreſs your longing for it, and to cry, even ſo come, Lord Jeſus, come quickly!

The Meditation *and* Prayer *of a* Chriſtian, *whoſe heart is warmed with theſe proſpects.*

"O Bleſſed Lord! my ſoul is enkindled in theſe views, and riſes to thee in the flame (u). Thou haſt teſtified, thou comeſt quickly: And I repeat my joyful aſſent, *Amen*, even ſo come Lord Jeſus (x). Come, for I long to have done with this low life; to have done with its burthens, its ſorrows, and its ſnares! come, for I long to aſcend into thy preſence and to ſee the crown thou art holding above!

"Bleſſed

(o) 2 Pet. iii. 13. (p) Rev. xxi. 9. [q] Eph. v. 27. [r] Rev. v. [t] 1 Theſ. iv. 17. (u] Judg. xiii. 20. [x] Rev. xxii. 20.

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(r) 1 Pet. i. 8

« Bleſſed Jeſus, death is transformed, when I view it in this light. The King of terrors is ſeen no more as ſuch, ſo near the King of glory and of grace. I hear with pleaſure the ſound of thy feet, approaching ſtill nearer and nearer: Draw aſide the veil, whenever thou pleaſeſt! open the bars of my priſon, that my eager ſoul may ſpring forth to thee, and caſt itſelf at thy feet; at the feet of that Jeſus, whom having not ſeen, I love; and in whom, tho' now I ſee thee not, yet believing, I rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory (y)! thou, Lord, ſhalt ſhew me the path of life: Thine hand ſhall guide me to thy bliſsful abode, where there is fulneſs of joy, and rivers of everlaſting pleaſure (z). Thou ſhalt aſſign me an habitation with thy faithful ſervants, whoſe ſeparate ſpirits are now living with thee, while their bodies ſleep in the duſt. Many of them have been my companions, in thy laborious work, and in the patience and tribulation of thy kingdom (a); my dear companions, and my brethren; Oh ſhew me, bleſſed ſaviour, how glorious and how happy thou haſt made them! ſhew me, to what new forms of better life thou haſt conducted them, whom we call the dead! in what nobler and more extenſive ſervices thou haſt employed them! that I may praiſe thee better than I now can, for thy goodneſs to them! and Oh give me to ſhare with them in their bleſſings and their ſervices, and to raiſe a ſong of grateful love, like that which they are breathing forth before thee!

« Yet, O my bleſſed redeemer, even there will my ſoul be aſpiring to a yet nobler and more glorious hope; and from this as yet unknown ſplendor and felicity, ſhall I be drawing new arguments to look and long for the day of thy final appearance. There ſhall I long more ardently than I now do, to ſee thy conduct vindicated, and thy triumph diſplayed; to ſee the duſt of thy ſervants re-animated, and death, the laſt of their enemies and of thine, ſwallowed up in victory (b). I ſhall long for that ſuperior honour that thou intendeſt me, and that compleat bliſs to which the whole body of thy people ſhall be

(y) 1 Pet. i. 8. (z) Pſal. xvi. 11. [a] Rev. i. 9. [b] Cor. xv. 26. 54.

conducted. Come, Lord Jeſus, come quickly, will mingle itſelf with the ſongs of paradiſe, and ſound like the tongues of all the millions of thy ſaints, whom thy grace has tranſplanted thither.

In the mean time, O my divine maſter, accept the homage which a grateful heart now pays thee, in a ſenſe of the glorious hopes with which thou haſt inſpired it! it is thou that haſt put this joy into it, and haſt raiſed my ſoul to this glorious ambition; whereas I might otherwiſe have been now groveling in the loweſt trifles of time and ſenſe, and been looking with horror on that hour, which is now the object of my moſt ardent wiſhes.

"Oh be with me always even to the end of this mortal life! and give me, while waiting for thy ſalvation, to be doing thy commandments! may my loins be girded about, and my lamp burning (c): And mine ears be ſtill watchful for the bleſſed ſignal of thine arrival: That my glowing ſoul may with pleaſure ſpring to meet thee, and be ſtrengthened by death to bear thoſe viſions of glory, under the extaſies of which feeble mortality would now expire."

CHAP.

(c) Luke xii. 35.

CHAP. XXX.

The Chriſtian honouring God by his Dying Behaviour.

Reflections on the ſincerity with which the preceeding advices have been given. §. 1. *The author is deſirous, that (if providence permit) he may aſſiſt the chriſtian to die honourably and comfortably* §. 2, 3. *With this view it is adviſed,* (1.) *To rid the mind of all earthly cares.* §. 4. (2.) *To renew the humiliation of the ſoul before God, and its application to the blood of Chriſt.* §. 5. (3.) *To exerciſe patience under bodily pains and ſorrows.* §. 6. (4.) *At leaving the world, to bear an honourable teſtimony to religion* §. 7. (5.) *To give a ſolemn charge to ſurviving friends.* §. 8. *eſpecially recommending faith in Chriſt.* §. 9. (6.) *To keep the promiſes of God in view.* §. 10, 11. *And,* (7.) *To commit the departing ſpirit to God, in the genuine exerciſes of gratitude and repentance, faith and charity;* §. 12. *which are exemplified in the concluding meditation and prayer.*

§. 1. THUS, my dear reader, I have endeavoured to lead you thro' a variety of circumſtances; and thoſe not fancied and imaginary, but ſuch as do indeed occur in the human and chriſtian life. And I can truly and cheerfully ſay, that I have marked out to you the path which I myſelf have trod, and in which it is my deſire ſtill to go on. I have ventured my own everlaſting intereſts on that foundation, on which I have directed you to adventure yours. What I have recommended as the grand buſineſs of your life, I deſire to make the buſineſs of my own: And the moſt conſiderable enjoyments, which I expect or deſire in the remaining days of my pilgrimage on earth, are ſuch as I have directed you to ſeek, and endeavoured to aſſiſt you in attaining.

Such

Such love to God, ſuch conſtant activity in his ſervice, ſuch pleaſurable views of what lies beyond the grave, appear to me (God is my witneſs,) a felicity incomparably beyond any thing elſe which can offer itſelf to our affection and purſuit: And I would not for ten thouſand worlds reſign my ſhare in them, or conſent even to the ſuſpenſion of the delights which they afford, during the remainder of my abode here.

§. 2. I would humbly hope, thro' the divine bleſſing, that the hours you have ſpent in the review of theſe plain things may have turned to ſome profitable account, and that in conſequence of what you have read, you have either been brought into the way of life, and peace or been induced to quicken your pace in it. Moſt heartily ſhould I rejoice in being further uſeful to you, and that even to the laſt. Now there is one ſcene remaining; a ſcene, thro' which you muſt infallibly paſs; which has ſomething in it ſo awful, that I cannot but attempt doing a little to aſſiſt you in it: I mean the dark valley of the ſhadow of death. I could earneſtly wiſh, that for the credit of your profeſſion, the comfort of your own ſoul, and the joy and edification of your ſurviving friends, you might die, not only ſafely but honourably too: And therefore I would offer you a few parting advices. I am ſenſible indeed, that providence may determine the circumſtances of your death in ſuch a manner, as that you may have no opportunity of acting upon the hints I now give you. Some unexpected accident from without, or from within, may as it were whirl you to heaven before you are aware; and you may find yourſelf ſo ſuddenly there, that it may ſeem a tranſlation, rather than a death. Or it is poſſible the force of a diſtemper may affect your underſtanding in ſuch a manner, that you may be quite inſenſible of the circumſtance in which you are; and ſo your diſſolution (tho' others may ſee it viſibly and certainly approaching,) may be as great a ſurprize to you, as if you had died in full health.

§. 3. But as it is on the whole probable, you may have a more ſenſible paſſage out of time into eternity; and

and as much may, in various reſpects, depend on your dying behaviour; give me leave to propoſe ſome plain directions with relation to it, to be practiſed, if God give you opportunity, and remind you of them. It may not be improper to look over the twenty ninth chapter again, when you find the ſymptoms of any threatning diſorder: And I the rather hope, that what I ſay may be uſeful to you, as methinks I find myſelf diſpoſed to addreſs you with ſomething of that peculiar tenderneſs which we feel for a dying friend; to whom, as we expect that we ſhall ſpeak to him no more, we ſend out as it were all our hearts in every word.

§. 4. I would adviſe then, in the firſt place, 'that as ſoon as poſſible, you would endeavour to get rid of all further care with regard to your temporal concerns, by ſettling them in time in as reaſonable and chriſtian a manner as you can.' I could wiſh, there may be nothing of that kind to hurry your mind when you are leaſt able to bear it, or to diſtreſs or divide thoſe who come after you. Do that, which in the preſence of God you judge moſt equitable, and which you verily believe will be moſt pleaſing to him. Do it in as prudent and effectual a manner as you can: And then, conſider the world as a place you have quite done with, and its affairs as nothing further to you, more than to one actually dead; unleſs as you may do any good to its inhabitants, while yet you continue among them; and may, by any circumſtance in your laſt actions or words in life, leave a bleſſing behind you to thoſe who have been your friends and fellow-travellers, while you have been diſpatching that journey thro' it which you are now finiſhing.

§. 5. That you may be the more at leiſure, and the better prepared for this, 'enter into ſome ſerious review of your own ſtate, and endeavour to put your ſoul into as fit a poſture as poſſible, for your ſolemn appearance before God.' For a ſolemn thing indeed it is, to go into his immediate preſence; to ſtand before him, not as a ſupplicant at the throne of his grace,

but at his bar as a ſeparate ſpirit, whoſe time of probation is over, and whoſe eternal ſtate is to be immediately determined. Renew your humiliation before God for the imperfections of your life, tho' it has in the main been devoted to his ſervice. Renew your application to the mercies of God as promiſed in the covenant of grace, and to the blood of Chriſt as the bleſſed channel in which they flow. Reſign yourſelf entirely to the divine diſpoſal and conduct, as willing to ſerve God, either in this world or the other, as he ſhall ſee fit. And ſenſible of your ſinfulneſs on the one hand, and of the divine wiſdom and goodneſs on the other, ſummon up all the fortitude of your ſoul to bear as well as you can, whatever his afflicting hand may further lay upon you, and to receive the laſt ſtroke of it, as one who would maintain the moſt entire ſubjection to the great and good Father of ſpirits.

§. 6. Whatever you ſuffer, 'endeavour to ſhew yourſelf an example of patience.' Let that amiable grace have its perfect work (a); and ſince it has ſo little more to do, let it cloſe the ſcene nobly. Let there not be a murmuring word; and when you feel any thing of that kind ariſing, look by faith upon a dying Saviour, and aſk your own heart, 'was not his croſs much more painful than the bed on which I lie? Was not his ſituation among blood thirſty enemies infinitely more terrible, than mine amidſt the tenderneſs and care of ſo many affectionate friends? Did not the heavy load of my ſins preſs him in a much more overwhelming manner, than I am preſſed by the load of theſe afflictions? and yet he bore all as a lamb that is brought to the ſlaughter (b).' Let the remembrance of his ſufferings be a means to ſweeten yours: Yea, let it cauſe you to rejoice, when you are called to bear the croſs for a little while, before you wear the crown. Count it all joy, that you have an opportunity yet once more of honouring God by your patience, which is now acting its laſt part, and will in a few days, perhaps in a few hours, be ſuperſeded by compleat everlaſting bleſſedneſs. And

[a] James i. 4. [b] Iſa. liii. 7.

And I am willing to hope, that in theſe views you will not only ſuppreſs all paſſionate complaints, but that your mouth will be filled with the praiſes of God; and that you will be ſpeaking to thoſe that are about you, not only of his juſtice, but of his goodneſs too. So that you will be enabled to communicate your inward joys in ſuch a manner, as may be a lively and edifying comment upon thoſe words of the Apoſtle, 'tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; even a hope which maketh not aſhamed, while the love of God is ſhed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghoſt which is given unto us (c).

§. 7. And now, my dear friend, now is the time, when it is eſpecially expected from you, that you bear an honourable teſtimony to religion. Tell thoſe that are about you, as well as you can, (for you will never be able fully to expreſs it,) what comfort and ſupport you have found in it. Tell them, how it has brightened the darkeſt circumſtances of your life; tell them, how it now reconciles you to the near views of death.—Your words will carry with them a peculiar weight at ſuch a ſeaſon: There will be a kind of eloquence, even in the infirmities with which you are ſtruggling, while you give them utterance; and you will be heard with attention, with tenderneſs, and with credit. And therefore, when the time of your departure is at hand, with unaffected freedom breathe out your joy, if you then feel (as I hope you will,) an holy joy and delight in God. Breathe out however your inward peace and ſerenity of mind, if you be then peaceful and ſerene: Others will mark it, and be encouraged to tread the ſteps which lead to ſo happy an end. Tell them what you feel of the vanity of the world, and they may learn to regard it leſs: Tell them, what you feel of the ſubſtantial ſupports of the goſpel; and they may learn to value it more: For they cannot but know, that they muſt lie down on a dying bed too, and muſt then need all the relief which the goſpel itſelf can give them.

§. 8.

[c] Rom. v. 3, 4, 5.

§. 8. And to inforce the conviction the more, 'give a ſolemn charge to thoſe that are about you, that they ſpend their lives in the ſervice of God, and govern themſelves by the principles of real religion.' You may remember, that Joſhua and David, and other good men did ſo; when they perceived that the days drew near in which they ſhould die. And you know not, how the admonitions of a dying friend, or (as it may be with reſpect to ſome,) of a dying parent, may impreſs thoſe who may have diſregarded what you and others may have ſaid to them before. At leaſt, make the trial; and die labouring to glorify God, to ſave ſouls, and generouſly to ſow the ſeeds of goodneſs and happineſs in a world, where you have no more harveſts to reap. Perhaps they may ſpring up in a plentiful crop, when the clods of the valley are covering your body: But if not, God will approve it; and the angels that wait around your bed to receive your departing ſoul, will look upon each other with marks of approbation in their countenance, and own that this is to expire like a chriſtian, and to make a glorious improvement of mortality.

§. 9. And in this laſt addreſs to your fellow-mortals, whoever they are that providence brings near you, 'be ſure that you tell them, how entirely and how chearfully your hopes and dependance in this ſeaſon of the laſt extremity are fixed, not upon your own merits and obedience, but on what the great Redeemer has done, and has ſuffered for ſinners.' Let them ſee, that you die as it were at the foot of the croſs: Nothing will be ſo comfortable to yourſelves, nothing ſo edifying to them. Let the name of Jeſus be therefore in your mouth, while you are able to ſpeak; and when you can ſpeak no longer, let it be in your heart, and endeavour that the laſt act of your ſoul, while it continues in the body, may be an act of humble faith in Chriſt. 'Come unto God by him: Enter into that which is within the veil, as with the blood of ſprinkling freſh upon you.' It is an awful thing for ſuch a ſinner, (as you, my chriſtian friend, with all the virtues the world may have

have admired, know yourſelf to be,) to ſtand before that infinitely pure and holy being, who has ſeen all your ways, and all your heart, and has a perfect knowledge of every mixture of imperfection which has attended the beſt of your duties: But venture in that way, and you will find it both ſafe and pleaſant.

§. 10. Once more, 'to give you comfort in a dying hour, and to ſupport your feeble ſteps while you are travelling thro' this dark and painful way, take the word of God as a ſtaff in your hand.' Let books, and mortal friends, now do their laſt office for you. Call if you can, 'ſome experienced chriſtian, who has felt the power of the word of God' upon his own heart; and let him bring the ſcripture, and turn you to ſome of thoſe precious promiſes, which have been the food and rejoicing of his own ſoul. It is with this view that I may carry the good office I am now engaged in as far as poſſible. I ſhall here give you a collection of a few ſuch admirable ſcriptures, each of them infinitely more valuable than thouſands of gold and ſilver (d). And to convince you of the degree in which I eſteem them, I will take the freedom to add, that I deſire they may (if God give an opportunity,) be read over to me, as I ly on my dying bed, with ſhort intervals between them, that I may pauſe upon each, and renew ſomething of that delightful reliſh, which, I bleſs God, I have often found in them. May your ſoul and mine be then compoſed to a ſecret ſilence (whatever be the commotion of animal nature,) while the voice of God ſpeaks to us, in language which he ſpake to his ſervants of old, or in which he inſtructed them how they ſhould ſpeak to him, in circumſtances of the greateſt extremity!

§. 11. Can any more encouragement be wanting, when he ſays, 'fear not, for I am with thee; be not diſmayed, for I am thy God: I will ſtrengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteouſneſs (e). And he is not a man that he ſhould lie, or the ſon of man that he ſhould repent; Hath he ſaid, and ſhall he not do it? Or

[d] Pſal. cxix. 72. [e] Iſai. xli. 10.

Or hath he ſpoken, and ſhall he not make it good (f)? The Lord is my light, and my ſalvation, whom ſhall I fear? The Lord is the ſtrength of my life, of whom ſhall I be afraid (g)? This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death (h). Therefore tho' I walk thro' the valley of the ſhadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy ſtaff they comfort me (i). I have waited for thy ſalvation, O Lord (k). Oh continue thy loving-kindneſs unto them that know thee, and thy righteouſneſs to the upright in heart! For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light ſhall we ſee light (l).—Thou wilt ſhew me the path of life; in thy preſence is fulneſs of joy, at thy right hand there are pleaſures for evermore (m). As for me, I ſhall behold thy face in righteouſneſs: I ſhall be ſatisfied, when I awake, with thy likeneſs (n). For I know in whom I have believed, and am perſuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him until that day (o). Therefore my heart is glad, and my joy rejoiceth; my fleſh alſo ſhall reſt in hope (p). For if we believe, that Jeſus died, and roſe again; thoſe alſo that ſleep in Jeſus, will God bring with him (q)——I give unto my ſheep eternal life, (ſaid Jeſus, the good ſhepherd,) and they ſhall never periſh, neither ſhall any pluck them out of my hand (r). This is the will of him that ſent me, that every one that believeth on me ſhould have everlaſting life; and I will raiſe him up at the laſt day (s). Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe alſo in me. In my Father's houſe are many manſions; if it were not ſo, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myſelf; that where I am there ye may be alſo (t). Go, tell my brethren, I aſcend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God (u). Father, I will that tho

(f) Num. xxiii. 19.
(g) Pſal. xxvii. 1.
(h) Pſal. xlviii. 1
(i) Pſal. xxiii. 14.
(k) Gen. xlix 18.
(l) Pſal. xxxvi. 9.
(m) Pſal xvi. 11.
(n) Pſal. xvii. 15
(o) 2 Tim. i.
[p] Pſal. xvi. 9.
[q] 1 Theſſ. iv. 14.
[r] John x. 28.
[s] John vi. 40.
[t] John xiv. 1, 2, 3.
[u] John xx. 17.

thoſe whom thou haſt given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou haſt given me; that the love wherewith thou haſt loved me, may be in them, and I in them (x).——He that teſtifieth theſe things ſaith, Surely I come quickly. Amen: even ſo come, Lord Jeſus (y)! O death, where is thy ſting? O grave where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory thro' our Lord Jeſus Chriſt (z).

§. 12. Thus may that God, who knows the ſouls of his children in all their adverſities (a), and in whoſe ſight the death of his ſaints is precious (b), chear and ſupport you and me in thoſe laſt extremities of nature! may he add us to the happy number of thoſe who have been more than conquerors in death! and may he give us thoſe ſupplies of his ſpirit which may enable us to pour out our departing ſouls in ſuch ſentiments, as thoſe I would now ſuggeſt; tho' we ſhould be no longer able to utter words, or to underſtand them if they were to be ready to us! Let us at leaſt review them with all proper affections now, and lay up one prayer more for that awful moment! Oh that this, and all we have ever offered with regard to it, may then come in remembrance before God (c)!

A Meditation *and* Prayer *ſuited to the Caſe of a dying* Chriſtian.

O Thou ſupream ruler of the viſible and inviſible worlds! thou ſovereign of life, and of death; of earth, and of heaven! bleſſed be thy name, I have often been taught to ſeek thee. And now once more do I pour out my ſoul, my departing ſoul, unto thee. Bow down thy gracious ear, O God, and let my cry come before thee with acceptance!

"The hour is come, when thou wilt ſeparate me from this world, with which I have been ſo long and ſo familiarly acquainted, and lead me to another, as yet unknown.

[x] John xvii. 24, 26. [y] Rev. xxii. 20. [z] 1 Cor. xv. 55, 57.
[a] Pſal. xxi. 7. [b] Pſal. cxvi. 15. [c] Acts x. 4, 31.

unknown. Enable me, I beſeech thee, to make the exchange, as becomes a child of Abraham, who being called of thee to receive an inheritance, obeyed, and went out, tho' he knew not particularly whether he went (d); as becomes a child of God, who knows, that thro' ſovereign grace, it is his Father's good pleaſure to give him the kingdom (e)!

"I acknowledge, O Lord, the juſtice of that ſentence by which I am expiring; and own thy wiſdom and goodneſs, in appointing my journey thro' this gloomy vale which is now before me. Help me to turn it into the happy occaſion of honouring thee, and adorning my profeſſion! and I will bleſs the pangs, by which thou art glorified, and this mortal and ſinful part of my nature is diſſolved.

"Gracious Father, I would not quit this earth of thine, and this houſe of clay in which I have ſojourned during my abode upon the face of it, without my grateful acknowledgments to thee, for all that abundant goodneſs which thou haſt cauſed to paſs before me here (f). With my dying breath I bear witneſs to thy faithful care, I have wanted no good thing (g). I thank thee, O my God, that this guilty, forfeited, unprofitable life was ſo long ſpared: That it hath been ſtill maintained by ſuch a rich variety of thy bounty. I thank thee, that thou haſt made this beginning of thy exiſtence ſo pleaſant to me. I thank thee, for the mercies of my days and nights, of my months and years, which are now come to their period: I thank thee for the mercies of my infancy, and for thoſe of my riper age; for all the agreeable friends which thou haſt given me in this houſe of my pilgrimage, the living and the dead; for all the help I have received from others, and for all the opportunities which thou haſt given me of being helpful to the bodies or ſouls of my brethren of mankind.—Surely goodneſs and mercy have followed me all the days of my life (h), and I have reaſon to riſe a thankful gueſt from the various and pleaſant entertainment with

(d) Heb. xi. 8. (e) Luke xii. 32. (f) Exod xxxiii. 19.
(g) Pſal. xxxiv. 10. (h) Pſal. xxiii. 6.

with which my table has been furniſhed by thee. Nor ſhall I have reaſon to repine, or to grieve at quitting them: For, O my God, are thy bounties exhauſted? I know, that they are not. I will not wrong thy goodneſs and thy faithfulneſs ſo much as to imagine, that becauſe I am going from this earth, I am going from happineſs. I adore thy mercy, that thou haſt taught me to entertain nobler views thro' Jeſus thy Son.—I bleſs thee with all the powers of my nature, that I ever heard of his name, and of his death: And would fain exert a more vigorous act of thankful adoration, than in this broken ſtate I am capable of, while I am extolling thee, for the riches of thy grace, manifeſted in him; for his inſtructions and his example, for his blood and his righteouſneſs, and for that bleſſed ſpirit of thine which thou haſt given me, to turn my ſinful heart unto thyſelf, and to bring me into the bonds of thy covenant; of that covenant, which is ordered in all things and ſure (i), and which this death, tho' now ſeparating my ſoul from my body, ſhall never be able to diſſolve.

"I bleſs thee, O Lord, that I am not dying in an unregenerate and impenitent ſtate; but that thou didſt graciouſly awaken and convince me; that thou didſt renew and ſanctify my heart, and didſt by thy good ſpirit work in it an unfeigned faith, a real repentance, and the beginning of a divine life. I thank thee for miniſters and ordinances: I thank thee for my Sabbaths, and my ſacrament-days; for the weekly and monthly refreſhments which they gave me: I thank thee for the fruits of Canaan, which were ſent me in the wilderneſs, and are now ſent me on the brink of Jordan. I thank thee for thy bleſſed word, and for thoſe exceeding rich and precious promiſes of it, which now lie as a cordial warm at my heart in this chilling hour; promiſes of ſupport in death, and of glory beyond it, and of the reſurrection of my body to everlaſting life. O my God, I firmly believe them all, great and wonderful as they are, and am waiting for the accompliſhment of them thro' Jeſus Chriſt; in whom they are

(i) 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

all yea and amen (k). Remember thy word unto thy ſervant, on which thou haſt cauſed me to hope (l)! I covenanted with thee not for worldly enjoyments, which thy love taught me comparatively to deſpiſe; but for eternal life, as the gift of thy free grace thro' Jeſus Chriſt my Lord (m): And now permit me in his name to enter my humble claim to it! Permit me to conſign this departing ſpirit to thine hand; for thou haſt redeemed it O Lord God of truth (n)? I am thine: Save me (o) and make me happy!

"But may I indeed preſume to ſay, I am thine! O God, now I am ſtanding on the borders of both worlds, now I view things, as in the light of thy preſence and eternity, how unworthy do I appear, that I ſhould be taken to dwell with thy angels and ſaints in glory! Alas, I have reaſon to look back with deep humiliation on a poor unprofitable ſinful life, in which I have daily been deſerving to be caſt into hell. But I have this one comfortable reflection, that I have fled to the croſs of Chriſt; and I now renew my application to it. To think of appearing before God in ſuch an imperfect righteouſneſs as my own, were ten thouſand times worſe than death. No, Lord! I come unto thee as a ſinner; but as a ſinner who has believed in thy Son for pardon and life: I fall down before thee as a guilty polluted wretch; but thou haſt made him to be unto thy people for wiſdom and righteouſneſs, for ſanctification and redemption (p). Let me have my lot among the followers of Jeſus! Treat me, as thou treateſt thoſe who are his friends and his brethren! for thou knoweſt, my ſoul has loved him, and truſted him, and ſolemnly ventured itſelf on the ſecurity of his goſpel. And I know in whom I have believed (q). The infernal lion may attempt to diſmay me in this awful paſſage: But I rejoice that I am in the hands of the good ſhepherd (r); and I defy all my ſpiritual enemies, in a chearful dependance on his faithful care. I lift up my eyes and my heart to him, who was dead and is alive again; and

(k) 2 Cor. i. 20. (l) Pſal. cxix. 49. (m) Rom. vi. 23.
(n) Pſal. xxxi. 5. [o] Pſal. cxix. 94. [p] 1 Cor. i. 30.
[q] 2 Tim. i. 12. [r] John x. 11, 28.

and behold, he lives for evermore, and hath the keys of death and of the unſeen world (s). Bleſſed Jeſus, I die by thine hand, and I fear no harm from the hand of a Saviour! I fear not that death, which is allotted to me by the hand of my deareſt Lord, who himſelf died to make it ſafe and happy. I come, Lord, I come not only with a willing, but with a joyful conſent. I thank thee, that remembereſt me for good; that thou art breaking my chains, and calling me to the glorious liberty of the children of God (t). I thank thee, that thou wilt no longer permit me to live at a diſtance from thine arms; but after this long abſence, wilt have me at home, at home for ever.

"My feeble nature faints in the view of that glory, which is now dawning upon me: But thou knoweſt how, gracious Lord, to let it in upon my ſoul by juſt degrees, and to make thy ſtrength perfect in my weakneſs (u). Once more, for the laſt time, would I look down on this poor world which I am going to quit, and breathe out my dying vows for its proſperity, and that of thy church in it. I have loved it, O Lord, as a living member of the body; and I love it to the laſt. I humbly beſeech thee therefore, that thou wilt guard it, and purify it, and unite it more and more! ſend down more of thy bleſſed ſpirit upon it, even the ſpirit of wiſdom, of holineſs, and of love; till in due time the wilderneſs be turned into a garden of the Lord (w), and all fleſh ſhall ſee thy ſalvation (x)!

"And as for me, bear me, O my heavenly Father; on the wings of everlaſting love, to that peaceful, that holy, that joyous abode, which thy mercy has prepared for me, and which the blood of my Redeemer hath purchaſed! bear me to the general aſſembly and church of the firſt born, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect (y)! and whatever this fleſh may ſuffer let my ſteady ſoul be delightfully fixed on that glory to which it is riſing! let faith perform its laſt office in an honourable manner!

[s] Rev. i. 18. [t] Rom. viii 21. [u] 2 Cor. xii. 9.
[w] Iſa. li. 3. [x] Luke iii. 6. [y] Heb. xii. 22, 23.

let my few remaining moments on earth be ſpent for thy glory; and ſo let me aſcend, with love in my heart, and praiſe on my faultering tongue, to the world where love and praiſe ſhall be compleat! Be this my laſt ſong on earth, which I am going to tune in heaven; Bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that ſitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever (z). *Amen.*"

(z) Rev. v. 13.

The Sum of our Duty to GOD and Man.

THE knowledge which my heart deſires
Is but to learn what God requires.
Speak then the word, my Father dear,
For all my ſoul's awake to hear:
And Oh, what joy my breaſt muſt move,
To hear that all thy law is love!
This is the ſum of ev'ry part;
To love the Lord with all my heart,
With all my ſoul, with all my might,
And in his ſervice to delight:
That I ſhould love my neigbour too,
And what I wiſh from them ſhould do.
How ſhort and ſweet, how good and plain,
Eaſy to learn, and to retain!
Oh may thy grace my ſoul renew!
And t'will be ſweet to practiſe too.

FINIS.